

**Internal Communications Review Study
December 2000**

Prepared for:

**State of Washington
Office of Financial Management
WorkFirst Performance Team**

Prepared by:

**The Frause Group Team
*The Frause Group
Evans/McDonough Company
The Douglass Group***

Table of Contents

Section	Page Number
Executive Summary	3
Findings	5
Study Overview	7
Methodology	9
Internal Communications Audit	10
Managers' Survey	20
Staff Survey	37
Focus Groups	54
Recommendations	59
Appendices	63
Report on Community Partners survey and findings	
Community Partners questionnaire and responses	
Managers questionnaire and responses	
Staff questionnaire invitation and responses	
Screening criterion for focus groups	

Executive Summary

Overview

In June 2000 the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) retained The Frause Group team of communication professionals to conduct an internal communications study involving the four main agencies that administer the WorkFirst program. These four agencies include the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Employment Security Department (ESD), Community and Technical Colleges (CTC) Board, and Office of Trade and Economic Development (OTED).

Because each agency has its own protocols and traditions for internal communications, State officials within OFM were concerned that internal communications flow within the program was not as effective or efficient as possible. The goal of the internal communications study conducted by The Frause Group team was to identify how the WorkFirst program could improve communication with and among its internal staff audience to increase performance and facilitate meeting performance targets.

The Frause Group team employed a variety of tactics to accomplish the goal of the study. These tactics included:

- Conducting an internal communications flow analysis
- Reviewing internal communications tools used by the key agencies
- Conducting surveys of both WorkFirst managers and staff
- Conducting focus groups with WorkFirst managers and staff in both western and eastern Washington
- Conducting surveys of WorkFirst Community Partners

Findings

As a result of these activities, The Frause Group team is able to provide OFM with key findings and major recommendations for improvements to the internal communications within the WorkFirst program. Our key findings include:

1. The lack of primary communication focal point for the WorkFirst program has perpetuated information confusion throughout all participating agencies.
2. The principal communication flow in the WorkFirst program is perceived to be one-way only.
3. Communication in the WorkFirst program is complicated by constant program changes and activities.

4. While each agency uses and promotes a variety of communication tools, the managers and staff from all participating agencies have a sense of “information overload.”

Recommendations

In an effort to improve and enhance internal communications within the WorkFirst program, The Frause Group team has provided the State with nine recommendations. These recommendations are included in the bulk of the report and include a request for some significant key changes.

The most significant recommendation is the need to provide a single-point leader for the WorkFirst program. This recommendation is made because a significant portion of the communications difficulties experienced by WorkFirst managers and staff has resulted from the disparate cultures of the participating agencies.

Another key recommendation is to establish a central communications office for the WorkFirst program. We believe that having a central point where managers and staff can go for WorkFirst information will significantly enhance the efficiency of internal communications.

And, finally, the last key recommendation is to provide for dynamic two-way internal communication. This recommendation is based upon the overwhelming response from managers and staff that WorkFirst communication is strictly top-down and they have little, if any, input into the program.

With this recommendation we propose a variety of tactics including a communication ombudsman to facilitate open two-way communication and the development of a WorkFirst web-based radio or TV talk show as well as the creation of a subscriber-based WorkFirst email listserve program.

Also provided in the recommendations section are a variety of ways to measure the effectiveness of proposed improvements to internal communications within the WorkFirst program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, The Frause Group team believes that the implementation of the key recommendations proposed in this report will significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of internal communications throughout the WorkFirst program. The current structure of Subcommittees and Local Area Planners provides a strong foundation for developing a successful internal communications program. Building upon this foundation and providing a dynamic two-way communication process for WorkFirst managers and staff should significantly improve the viability of the WorkFirst program. This is a very worthwhile program and one that is important to the entire State of Washington and its constituency.

Findings

As a result of a comprehensive communication flow analysis; an internal communications tools audit; manager and staff quantitative surveys; manager and staff focus groups; and community partner surveys, The Frause Group team has uncovered the following findings relating to the WorkFirst internal communication activities.

Finding #1 – The lack of a primary communication focal point for the WorkFirst program has perpetuated information confusion throughout all participating agencies.

Because the cultures within the participating agencies are dissimilar, each agency communicates WorkFirst-related information differently. In addition, each agency manager chooses the depth of communication penetration. This selective, top-down communication flow has resulted in the creation of “communication silos” within the participating agencies. Because the flow of information is selective within the participating agencies it has resulted in confusion at the Local Area Planning level. The confusion arises because the interagency information exchange at the Local Area Planning level is usually anecdotal and messages are either non-existent or inconsistent with original communication from the Subcommittees.

Managers and staff indicated that they are frustrated at not knowing the same information as other agency managers and staff. Some staff also indicated that they are unsure of their particular department’s role within the WorkFirst program. Both managers and staff feel that one entity or individual should be accountable for the overall performance of the WorkFirst program.

Finding #2 – The principal communication flow in the WorkFirst program is perceived to be one-way only.

Study findings indicated that managers and staff are highly frustrated by the lack of a bottom-up communication channel to provide program feedback to the WorkFirst Subcommittee management structure. This is especially true with regards to performance goals and measures. Managers and staff also indicated that – due to individual agency cultures – flexibility should be key in any internal communications overhaul. They fear communication by mandates because typically the mandate does not recognize individual agency process. Some managers and staff indicated that they appreciated sharing Best Management Practices. They also felt that this type of communication was very beneficial and should be on the WorkFirst website (as long as approaches shared through the Best Management Practices were not mandated program-wide).

Finding #3 – Communication in the WorkFirst program is complicated by constant program changes and activities.

The manager and staff studies found that ill-communicated program changes caused daily concern and confusion. Managers and staff in all participating agencies indicated that they do not always see how certain changes are in keeping with the overall program goals. Most importantly, staff and managers want to know why the change is being made. Managers and

staff also expressed concern regarding the tone of communication. They feel that the communication from the Subcommittees is always in the form of a mandate and there is no room for feedback. Additionally, some agency staff expressed concern that, due to constant changes, they are unsure of their role in the WorkFirst program.

Finding #4 – While each agency uses and promotes a variety of communication tools, the managers and staff from all participating agencies, have a sense of “information overload.”

Managers and staff indicated that they were frustrated by the amount of information provided regarding the WorkFirst program. They would like to have one place to go for information. Currently, each participating agency has both an internal and external website that hosts information about WorkFirst. In addition, WorkFirst has its own website. Because information exists in so many places, managers and staff are confused over the best way to access “the real” WorkFirst information. Managers and staff also complained that they receive far too many e-mails. As a result, they tend to only read the ones that come from a familiar source. Finally, even though managers and staff felt that there was a tremendous amount of “information overload,” they agreed that face-to-face meetings and personal relationships are still the most effective forms of communication.

Study Overview

This section provides some background information on the WorkFirst program and the consulting team chosen to conduct the internal communications study. It also provides information regarding the overall objective of the study as well as the State's expectations for the study.

Background of the WorkFirst Program

The State of Washington launched the WorkFirst program in August 1997. This program is administered by four key state agencies, including Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Employment Security Department (ESD), Community and Technical Colleges (CTC) Board, and Office of Trade and Economic Development (OTED).

In addition to these four agencies, numerous community partners and private businesses are involved with the program. Each agency has its own protocols and traditions for internal communications. As a result, OFM representatives believe that communications within the individuals who work under the WorkFirst program has been challenging.

In addition to communication challenges, the WorkFirst program's performance is measured against ambitious targets. Monthly performance data are broken down by local areas where interagency teams are held accountable for their outcomes. To sustain high performance, staff at all levels within the program need a clear understanding of program goals and their roles. OFM also believes that staff need to be aware of the many policy details necessary to deliver the best service to clients.

According to OFM, effective communication with all individuals in the WorkFirst program is paramount to the program's overall success. Consequently, OFM solicited proposals from qualified consultants to conduct a review of the internal communications processes within the WorkFirst program.

Background of The Frause Group Team

In June 2000, the State of Washington selected The Frause Group team to conduct a comprehensive internal communications review for WorkFirst. The Frause Group team is comprised of three companies:

The Frause Group provides public relations, public affairs, and marketing communications consultation services to public and private organizations. The firm is led by 28-year industry veteran, Bob Frause.

Evans McDonough is a comprehensive market research services company, specializing in qualitative and quantitative studies, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, intercepts, and mail, fax and telephone surveys for political, corporate, government and non-profit clients.

The Douglass Group offers marketing communications, strategic planning, and public relations services to professional services firms. The founder, Candice Douglass, has extensive experience in providing effective internal communications during significant corporate activities such as acquisition, transition and name change.

The members of The Frause Group team have worked together on numerous other projects and have a strong and positive working relationship.

Overall Project Objective

OFM retained The Frause Group team to identify how the WorkFirst program could efficiently improve communication with and among its internal staff audience to increase performance and facilitate meeting performance targets.

Project Expectations

The State of Washington had the following expectations for the internal communications review:

1. Identify all primary channels of communication (top-down, lateral and bottom-up) within and between the individual agency systems.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of message delivery. What's getting through? Where are blockages?
3. Evaluate how effectively messages are being received. Is information being understood? Is it credible? Is it being acted on? Are messages consistent?
4. Recommend improvements for internal communications that support achieving the WorkFirst performance goals.
5. Recommend methods for evaluating the effectiveness of improvements.

The information provided in this final report will clearly address each of these expectations.

Methodology

To meet the OFM's overall objective and expectations, The Frause Group team conducted a variety of activities, including:

- Gain an understanding of the communication flow process within the WorkFirst program, beginning with the Subcommittees 1-3 and ending at the Local Area Planners level
- Audit of internal communications tools
- Meet and interview WorkFirst staff members, including attending a Subcommittee 2 meeting and a communications managers meeting
- Conduct manager and staff surveys
- Conduct manager and staff focus groups
- Conduct community partners surveys

The Frause Group team has used the information gathered from these activities to develop recommendations and methods for evaluating the effectiveness of the recommendations. A detailed discussion regarding each of these activities is provided in the proceeding sections of this report.

In addition to the above-mentioned activities, members of The Frause Group team presented preliminary findings from the manager and staff surveys during the WorkFirst Manager's conference in Spokane in November 2000.

Internal Communications Audit

To gain an understanding of the primary channels of communication within and between the individual agencies involved in the WorkFirst program, The Frause Group team met with WorkFirst staff representatives, including Subcommittee 2 members. The Frause Group team also conducted an audit of the various internal communications tools used by the agencies involved in the WorkFirst program.

Primary Channels of Communication

The Governor's office is responsible for the overall performance of the WorkFirst program. Communication from the Governor's office tends to flow downward, beginning with the Subcommittee 1 group. This group includes the highest-level managers within the four participating agencies and the OFM. This committee is chaired by the OFM (currently Marty Brown). The Subcommittee 1 members meet approximately four-times per year and provide strategic planning and set policies for the WorkFirst program.

Subcommittee 1 communicates the strategies and policies to Subcommittee 2 which consists of managers from the four agencies and the OFM. Staff from the OFM (Ken Miller and Cathy Wiggins) chair Subcommittee 2. This group is comprised of 10-15 members and meets weekly (on Mondays). The Subcommittee 2 group is the main policy-setting body for the WorkFirst program. It also has responsibility for the annual Workfirst managers conference. Subcommittee 2 communicates directly with the Governor's office as well as with the members of Subcommittees 1 and 3.

Subcommittee 3 is operational in nature and has approximately 20-30 members. The members are representatives from DSHS, ESD, CTC, WDEW, OTED, OFM, and tribes. Subcommittee 3 communicates with the Local Area Partners, OTED Local Area Planning Coordinator and the community partners on both a regional and local level. Figure 1 provides a simplified view of the flow of communication within the WorkFirst program.

Once communication leaves the Subcommittee 3 level (which is interagency communication), the individual agency protocols control the flow. Then, at the Local Area Planners level, the communication once again becomes interagency.

There are 32 Local Area Planners and they include staff from the four participating agencies as well as community partners (businesses who work with WorkFirst in a variety of ways). The Local Area Planners meet at varying times and frequencies, depending on the person responsible for leading the Local Area Planning efforts. Through a best management practices program, the Local Area Planners provide feedback and input regarding techniques and approaches that work well within their particular area. This communication is provided to all participating agencies in written format.

Key Findings

By understanding the communication flow within the WorkFirst program, the Frause Group team was able to identify two key findings relating to communication flow within the WorkFirst program.

1. **The lines of communication between Subcommittees 1, 2 and 3 are clear. However, communication lines begin to break apart once the communication goes beyond Subcommittee 3. The managers involved at the Subcommittee 2 and 3 levels are responsible for communicating WorkFirst plans and policies within their agency. Each agency has its own protocol for communicating WorkFirst information to staff. The varying protocols create “silos” of information and as a result, staff involved in WorkFirst from one agency may not have access to the same information as staff from another agency.**
2. **The differences in communication between the participating agencies cause confusion at the Local Area Planning level. Additionally, much of the communication that occurs at this level is extremely important to the overall success of the WorkFirst efforts in each area. Managers and staff agree that the best management practices booklet is an effective way to share information. In fact, some managers indicated they would like to see this information shared on a regular basis on the website. However, the managers also fear that the Subcommittee members will mandate certain practices without first obtaining feedback from the Local Area Planners.**

Communication Tools

The Frause Group team reviewed a variety of communications tools used in the WorkFirst program. The participating agencies provided samples of communications tools used in each agency. The following table provides information on the various tools used to communicate to managers and staff about WorkFirst related issues.

Communication Tool	Brief Description	Produced by	Distributed to
Community/Technical Colleges e-mail messages	Communications with colleges is done electronically WorkFirst staff from the State Board communicate directly with the WorkFirst Coordinator on each campus.	Sally Hanson and Lorna Sutton, CTC	WorkFirst Coordinators on campus and some other interested personnel on campus

WorkFirst Report	This report is entitled “Preparing Welfare and Other Low-Income Adults for Work and Better Job – A Report on Low-Income Students Enrolled in Colleges and the Start-up of WorkFirst Programs	CTC	Community and Trade Colleges who participate in the WorkFirst program
Website – www.workforceEd.com	This website is directed to the community and technical colleges and is maintained by CTC. It does contain information on WorkFirst as well as a link to the multi-agency WorkFirst website.	Sally Hanson and Lorna Sutton, CTC	All WorkFirst staff within the college system
CTC press/news releases	Press releases regarding a variety of issues such as funding, upcoming board meetings and accountability reports are issued. These press releases are mailed out and posted on the board web site.	CTC Board staff	College presidents, public information officers and other administrators. (Note, sometimes these press releases are reprinted by the colleges in their internal newsletters.
The Smart Investment newsletter	Provides information regarding WorkFirst uses case studies as examples.	CTC issues	CTC college presidents
“One-pagers/background pieces”	These are issued on a wide range of topics such as legislative requests, major public issues and programs/projects. WorkFirst programs are sometimes the subjects of these one-pagers. These are mailed and posted on the website.	CTC Board staff	College presidents, public information officers and selected administrators, legislators, legislative staff, and media.
Legislative News	During the legislative session, CTC Board issues a weekly newsletter to the colleges. These reports are e-mailed, mailed, and posted to the Board’s website.	CTC Board staff	E-mailed to presidents, public information officers, trustees, and anyone who requests it.

CTED			
Community Jobs Flyer	Promotional material designed for external audience but seen by internal audience	Julie Wilson, WorkFirst Program Manager, CTED	Distributed at WorkFirst conference and the CJ Institute also available by request
Community Jobs, Network News	Newsletters – Provides Community Jobs Partner Update, News Around the State, Partner Profiles, and Calendar	Economic Opportunities Institute (a non-profit partner with CTED)	Community Jobs contractors
Community Jobs' 1999 Marketing and Communications Strategy	Document highlights the various tools used to market and build awareness of Community Jobs to relevant stakeholders.	Economic Opportunities Institute	CTED/OTED staff
CTED WebPages on WorkFirst website	Provides overview of CTED and information on Community Jobs	CTED	Anyone who goes to the website
WorkFirst Strategies for Local Area Planners	Table with information on various goals for the program, what strategies will be used to meet the goal, which is the responsible/lead agency within WorkFirst and outcomes.	Bruce Lund, WorkFirst Local Area Planning Coordinator, CTED	Local Area Planner leads
DSHS			
1998 Focus Groups project	Report captures the opinions and perceptions shared by a diverse group of constituents (including participants from WorkFirst clients, DSHS case managers, ESD job service specialists, DSHS and ESD first line supervisors, DSHS and ESD local administrators, community social service providers/PICs/CAPs, and business leaders and employers) regarding the implementation and impact	MGT of America, Inc. (outside consultant)	Patricia Richards, Administrator, DSHS and WorkFirst Focus Groups Steering Committee

	of the WorkFirst program. There are references to communication issues throughout the report.		
WorkFirst Implementation Studies: Significant Themes and Issues	This document appears to be a summary of findings from Implementation Studies and was prepared on April 9, 1999. There is a small section (II) on Communication within WorkFirst Subcabinet; between headquarters and field; and cross-agency, field level.	Prepared by DSHS Economic Services Administration Planning and Policy Analysis/Management Reports and Data Analysis	Limited distribution to managers in Olympia
WorkFirst Fact Sheets	Various fact sheets on the WorkFirst program and child support program.	DSHS Publications Management	External
DSHS Internet Site	Provides all kinds of information on DSHS activities, including WorkFirst. The link to WorkFirst information is on the "Financial Help" button.	DSHS Publications Management	Anyone who has access to the DSHS internet site.
News Connection, a monthly newsletter for DSHS staff and friends	Provides information on all activities within DSHS. Contains some articles regarding WorkFirst program.	DSHS Publications Management	DSHS staff
WorkFirst Tips	Newsletter focused totally on the WorkFirst program.	DSHS Publications Management	DSHS staff and WorkFirst division Intranet site within DSHS
Organizational Chart	Provides an organizational flow chart of the DSHS, dated 2/23/2000	DSHS Publications Management	No formal distribution
Inventory of Electronic Media Available to WorkFirst	A table that provides the various forms of electronic media available to WorkFirst, including WorkFirst Internet site; WorkFirst Division Intranet site; Intranet – e-NEWS at E-Z (Manual) Start; e-mail; Information System/TPX Message; JAS Welcome screen; JAS e-	DSHS WorkFirst Division	Limited distribution for purpose of internal communications review

	mail; Listserve (Dept. of Information Services); ACES Broadcast message (available until replaced by intranet site for ACES manuals – July 2000); ACES e-mail; Barcode system broadcast message; Planned Internet – Working Connections Child Care Website		
WorkFirst Interim Implementation Handbook – Second Edition July 1998	Very extensive manual that includes Introduction; Goals and Principles; Historical Perspective; Case Management; Eligibility; WorkFirst Work Program Entry; Employability Evaluation; Sanction; Post Job Search Activities; Employment; Working Connections Child Care; Legal Authorization.	DSHS WorkFirst Division	DSHS Case Managers
DSHS WorkFirst Division Intranet	Intranet site that includes a link to DSHS Intranet and DSHS Website; also includes the WorkFirst Handbook	DSHS Publications Management	Anyone with access.
Washington Administrative Code Chapter 388-310: WorkFirst – August 1, 2000 – DSHS, ESA, WorkFirst Division	Unofficial copy of the Code that describes the WorkFirst program, what it is, who it serves. The WorkFirst website has a link to the Code.	Washington State Office of the Code Reviser	Available to anyone/public information
ESD			
WorkFirst Outreach Report	Provides updates on outreach activities with the business community. Sent via e-mail.	ESD staff	e-mailed to business outreach/interagency staff
Folder – Employers: How can we help?	Packet used by ESD staff for business outreach; includes WorkFirst Business Outreach Performance Measures. (More of an external communications tool)	ESD Staff	Businesses

WorkFirst Resources for Business packet	Includes marketing materials that describe WorkFirst program. (More of an external communications tool)	ESD Staff	Businesses
Employment Security Department Organizational Chart	Provides information on the WorkFirst Unit within ESD.	ESD	Available upon request
ESD/Community College & Technical College Co-Location Sites Offering Employment Services	List of locations where Employment Security has co-located job service offices on college campuses across the state.	ESD	No formal distribution
Electronic Morning News	Daily publication provides information on ESD activities, including WF.	ESD – John Welsh – Office of Public Affairs	ESD Staff
Miscellaneous internet and intranet site links	Includes sites for InsideESD and wa.gov.WorkFirst.	ESD – Office of Public Affairs	Anyone with access to these sites.
Dateline ESD – employee newsletter	Has articles on a variety of ESD activities, including WorkFirst	ESD – Office of Public Affairs	Washington State Employment Security Staff
Sept 1999 In FocusVideo	Contains internal video newsletters with stories on WorkFirst	ESD – Office of Public Affairs	ESD Staff
March 2000 InFocus Video	Contains internal video newsletters with stories on WorkFirst	ESD – Office of Public Affairs	ESD Staff
May 2000 InFocus Video	Contains internal video newsletter with stories on WorkFirst	ESD – Office of Public Affairs	ESD Staff
Who Wants the Earned Income Tax Credit Video	Video on Earned Income Tax Credit	ESD – Office of Public Affairs	ESD Staff
OFM			
1999 WorkFirst Managers and partners Conference Materials	Variety of materials and handouts used in the 1999 managers and partners conference in Yakima.	OFM	All attendees of the conference
Building Better Lives, Results of the First Year – December 1998	Annual Report describing WorkFirst and the progress/results from the first year of operation.	OFM – Kathy Davis	All WorkFirst staff

WorkFirst website	Contains a huge amount of information on the various agencies and partners of WorkFirst.	OFM – Kathy Davis	Anyone with access
Miscellaneous			
WorkFirst Communication	Subcommittee 3 communications protocol	OFM – Kathy Davis	Subcommittee 3 members
Best Practices Portfolio	A culmination of best practices and innovative ideas from all WorkFirst agencies, including Local Planners and Welfare to Work. This is a resource for sharing information.	Gov. Locke’s office	WorkFirst Agencies (DSHS, ESD, LAP, OTED, SBCTC, and WtW)

Key Findings

Based on our review of the various communications tools used by the participating agencies and feedback from staff and managers, The Frause Group team identified four key findings relating to communications tools used in the WorkFirst program.

1. **Each participating agency in the WorkFirst program has its own protocols and tools for communicating information about the WorkFirst program. Some of the materials provided to The Frause Group team were distributed to a very limited audience (which is to be expected given the content of this communication.) Examples of this type of limited distribution include the WorkFirst Implementation Studies, and the 1998 Focus Groups project conducted by MGT of America, Inc.**
2. **During the internal communications study, several communications tools were well received by both managers and staff. These tools include the Electronic Morning News produced by ESD staff and the Best Practices Portfolio. In fact, some managers thought the WorkFirst website should have an area dedicated to Best Practices and that the communication format should be short and concise.**
3. **Both managers and staff from all participating agencies would like to see a searchable and current version of the WorkFirst Handbook on the WorkFirst website. They all agreed that the Handbook should be available on the external website, so that all parties would have access to the information. They also stressed that it is important to keep this information current.**

- 4. Managers and staff expressed confusion over all the websites where an individual can access WorkFirst-related information. They felt it would be much more efficient to have WorkFirst communication and information located at one site.**

Manager's Survey

The Frause Group team developed a survey questionnaire to solicit information from WorkFirst managers regarding internal communications. A copy of the questionnaire and the managers' responses to the open ended questions are provided in the Appendices.

Background

The Frause Group team conducted the managers' survey from September 7 through October 10, 2000 using a list of 724 WorkFirst managers compiled by the various WorkFirst partners and agencies.

To ensure a valid random sample of managers, The Frause Group team randomly pre-selected 275 managers out of the universe of 724 WorkFirst managers prior to the initial mailing and emailing of the survey. Only the results from these pre-selected managers are included in the final data set. This ensures a data set that is statistically projectable to the entire universe of WorkFirst managers. Using the small universe margin of error calculation, the overall margin of error for the manager survey results is ± 4.6 points at the 95 percent confidence interval.

We did mail the survey to the 275 pre-selected managers and e-mailed the survey to all 724 managers, to give all managers an opportunity to be included in the process even if their input is not part of the final data set. We have included comments and responses to open end questions for all managers who responded to the survey in the Appendices.

Methodology

On September 5th, The Frause Group team sent out a total of 724 mail surveys to all managers in the list. On September 7th we sent email invitations to the same 724 managers. The mail survey packet included the survey and a return envelope with postage. The mail survey also included instructions on how to complete the survey online. The email invitations included a description of the goals of the project and a link to the web survey with instructions on how to complete the survey online.

All communications came from and were returned to the offices of Evans/McDonough. Respondents were told that administrators in Olympia or any state staff would never see individual responses. This was done to ensure confidentiality and to encourage respondents to be honest and frank when filling out the survey.

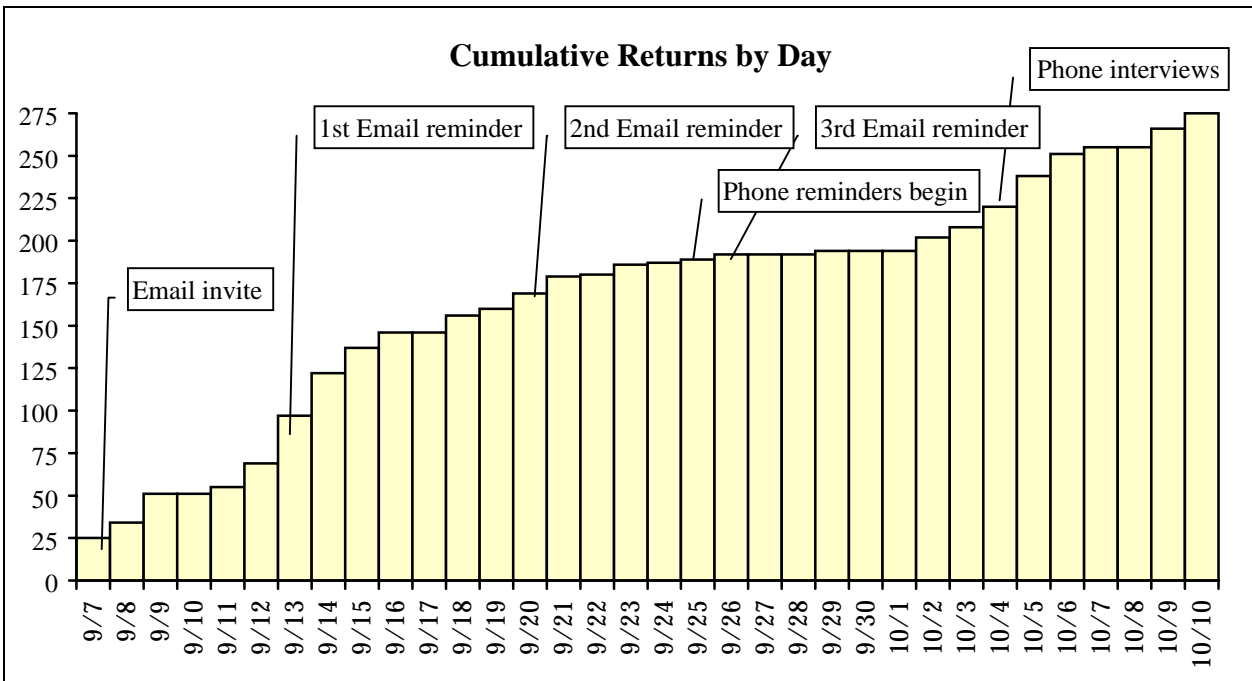
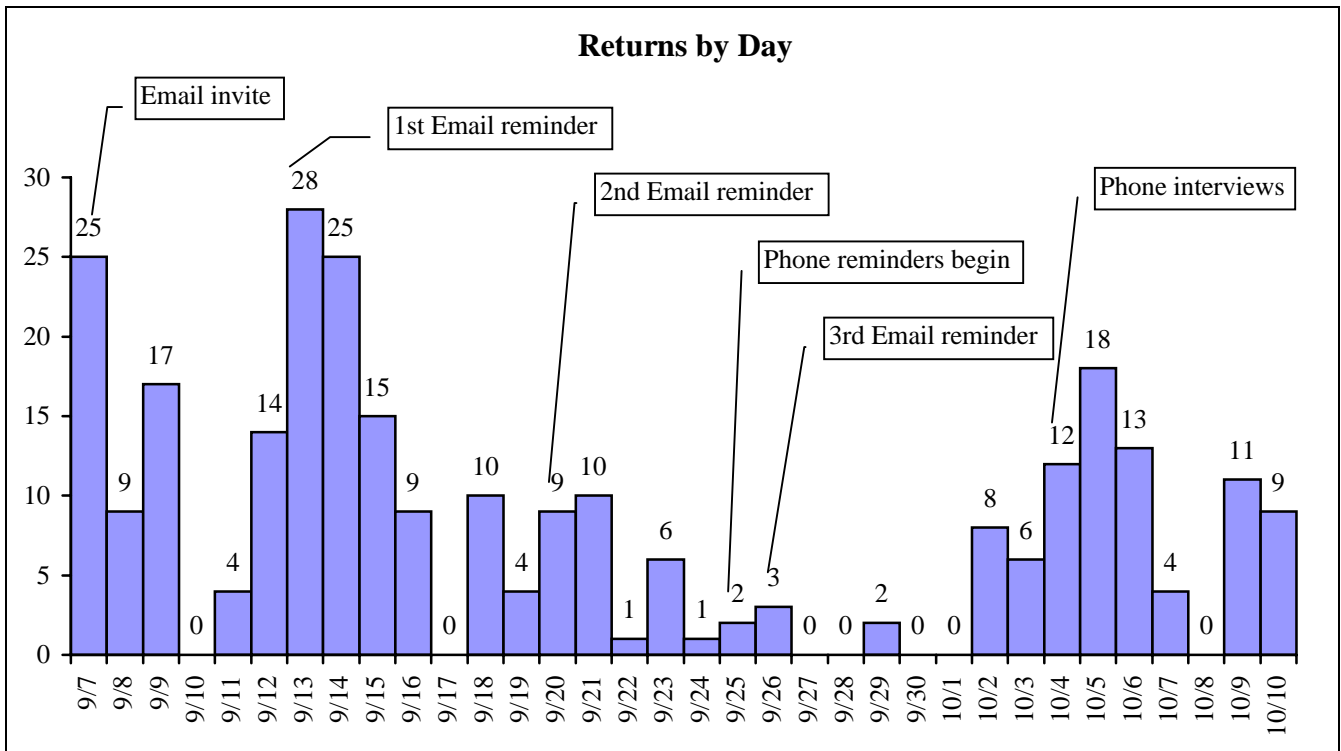
Fifteen mail surveys were returned by the post office because of bad addresses and over 100 emails were returned as undeliverable. Those email addresses with obvious mistakes were fixed. After this 63 bad email addresses remained. Eight managers were removed from the list because the person was no longer there or they indicated that they were not involved in WorkFirst.

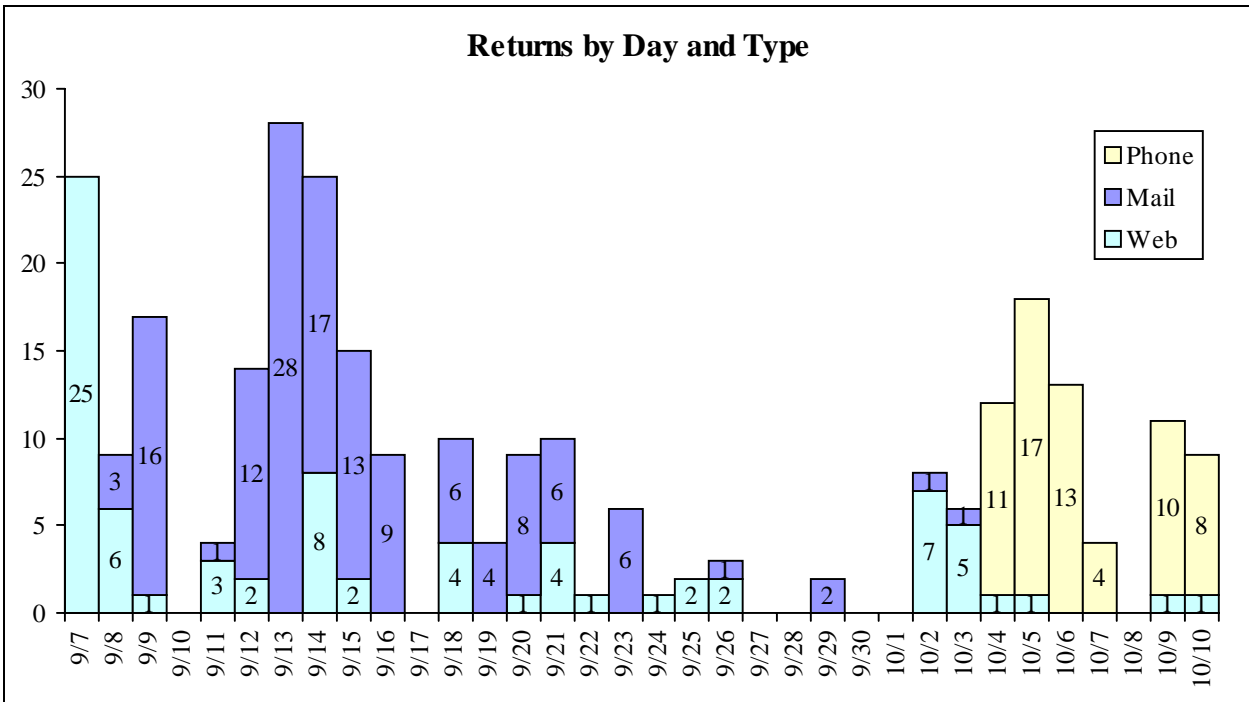
On September 13th, we sent reminder emails to the 178 pre-selected managers who had not yet completed the survey. A second email reminder was sent a week later on September 20th to 107 pre-selected managers who had not yet responded. Telephone reminder calls began on September 25th to the 86 remaining pre-selected managers with outstanding surveys and the next day, a third and final email reminder was sent to 83 managers. On October 4th, we began contacting by phone the 67 pre-selected managers who had still not completed the survey.

Timeline

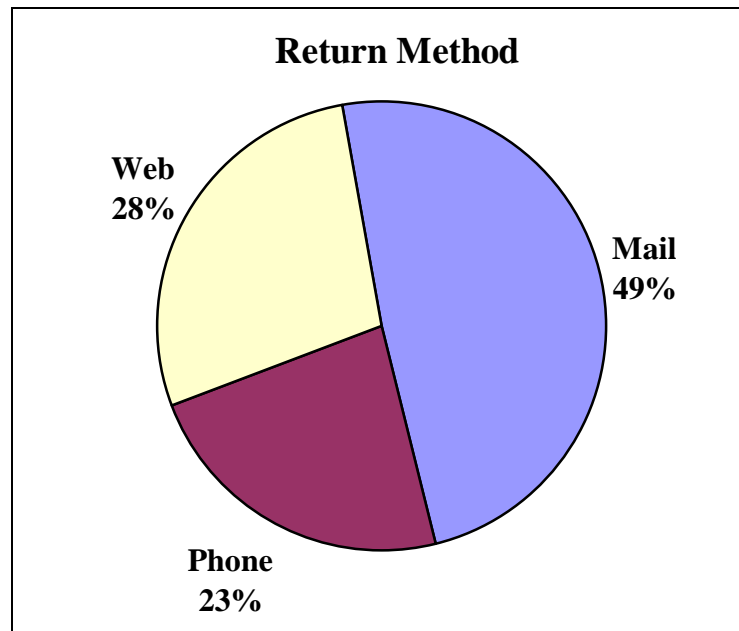
Date	Action
September 5 th	surveys mailed to all 719 managers
September 7 th	email invitations sent to all 719 managers
September 13 th	email reminders sent to 178 remaining pre-selected managers
September 20 th	email reminders sent to 107 remaining pre-selected managers
September 25 th	reminder phone calls begin to 86 remaining pre-selected managers
September 26 th	email reminders sent to 83 remaining pre-selected managers
October 4 th	phone interviewing to 67 remaining pre-selected managers begin
October 10 th	all 275 pre-selected manager surveys completed

The next three graphs show the returns by day and by type (Mail, Web, or Phone).





Of the 275 pre-selected manager surveys returned, half (49%, 134) were completed by mail, 28% (78) on the web, and 23% (63) by phone.



Key Findings

Upon a thorough review and analysis of the managers' responses to the survey, the Frause Group team identified six key findings relating to internal communications at the managers level.

- 1. Strong majorities of managers agree that having good internal, local, and state-level WorkFirst communication is important, although managers place higher importance on internal and local WorkFirst communication than they do on state-level WorkFirst communication.**
- 2. A strong majority of managers agree that there is good internal and local communication and four-in-ten managers agree that there is good communication at the state level, but one-third (33%) say they don't know.**
- 3. Overall, managers also indicate that internal and local WorkFirst communication is more effective than state-level WorkFirst communication. However, once again, roughly a third of the managers are not able to rate the effectiveness of state-level WorkFirst communication.**
- 4. Phone and email are the most frequently used methods for WorkFirst communication, with a majority of managers using them on a daily basis. And email and phone are seen as the most useful methods for WorkFirst communication. Although internal and partner meets are less frequent methods of communication, strong majorities of managers find both types of meetings to be useful.**
- 5. Managers are more likely to say they know who they are supposed to pass different types of WorkFirst information on to than to know who they are supposed to receive different types of WorkFirst information from, although they feel that both these aspects of WorkFirst communication are equally important.**
- 6. Most managers agree that they understand the overall goals of the WorkFirst program and strong majorities agree that they are kept informed about the performance goals for the WorkFirst program and about WorkFirst program changes that affect their organizations. However, roughly half of the managers do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about the performance goals or program changes that affect their organizations.**

Profile of Respondents

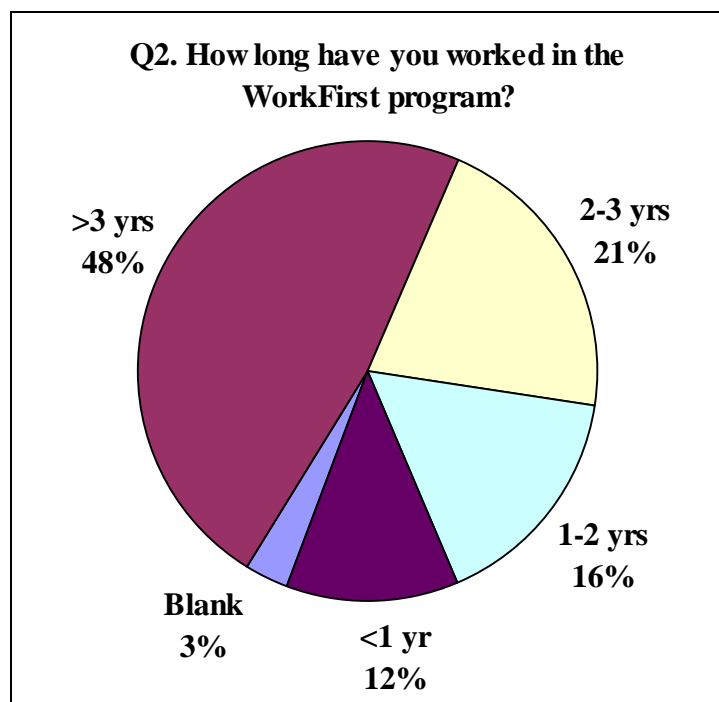
Three-fourths (79%) of the responses were from managers in DSHS – 53% from DSHS/CSD, 23% from DSHS/DCS, 3% from DSHS/WF & DMOS – 12% came from ESD, and 9% came

from the colleges. These percentages accurately reflect the overall percentages by organization in the manager database as a whole.

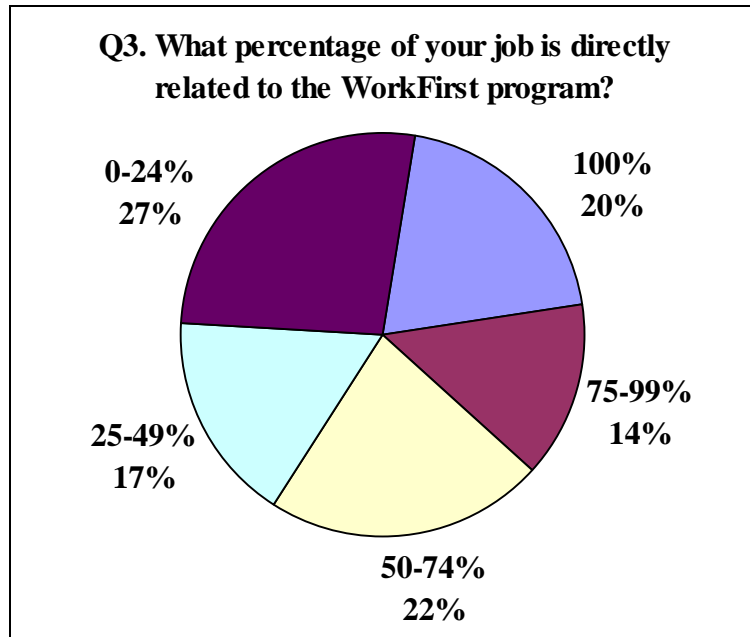
Returns By Organization

Agency/Organization	Database	Pre-selected
DSHS	78%	79%
ESD	11%	12%
Colleges	11%	9%
OTED	0.02%	0%

Half of the respondents (48%) had worked in the WorkFirst program for more than 3 years, 21% between 2 and 3 years, 16% between 1 and 2 years, 7% between 6 months and a year, and 5% less than 6 months.

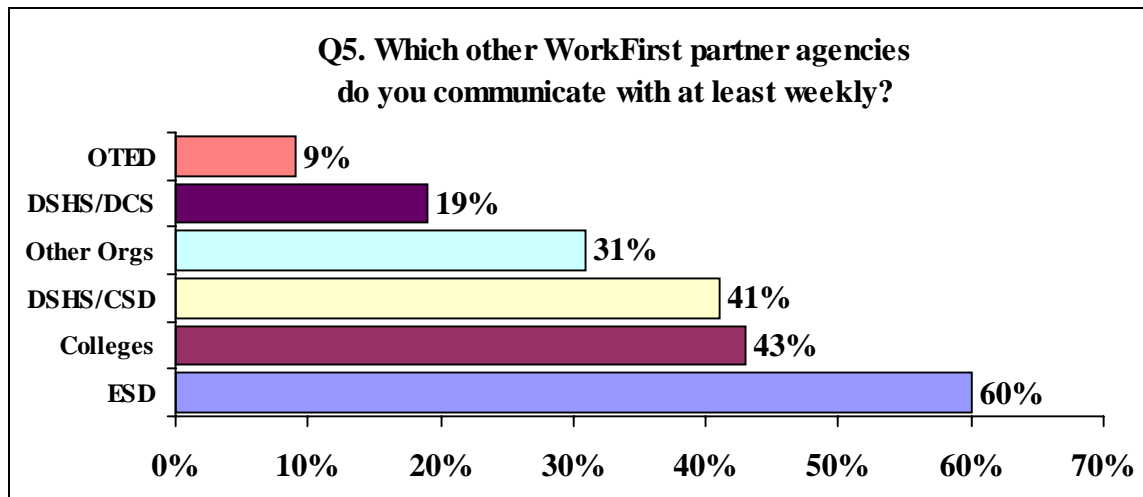


Overall, 56% of the managers surveyed say that 50% or more of their job is WorkFirst related and one-fifth (20%) say that 100% of their job is WorkFirst related. Of those that say 100% of their job is WorkFirst related, 69% are from DSHS/CSD, 15% are from ESD, 7% are from the colleges, 6% are from DSHS/WF & DMOS, and 4% are from DSHS/DCS.



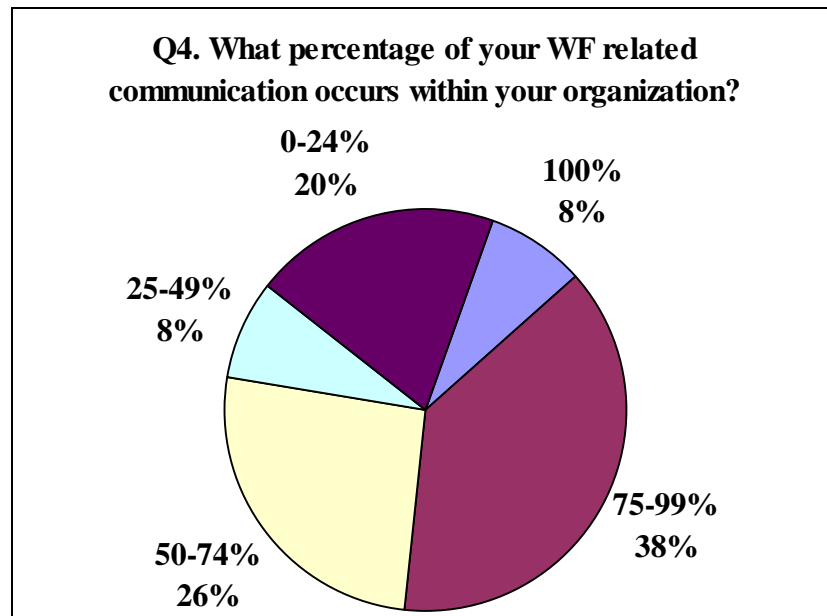
DSHS/CSD (67%) and DSHS/WF & DMOS (66%) managers report the highest average level of WorkFirst involvement and DSHS/DCS (15%) and the colleges (39%) report the lowest average level of WorkFirst involvement.

Overall, six-in-ten managers (60%) say they communicate with ESD at least weekly, 43% say the communicate with the colleges at least weekly, and 41% with DSHS/CSD. Managers are least likely to communicate ith OTED on a regular basis (9%).

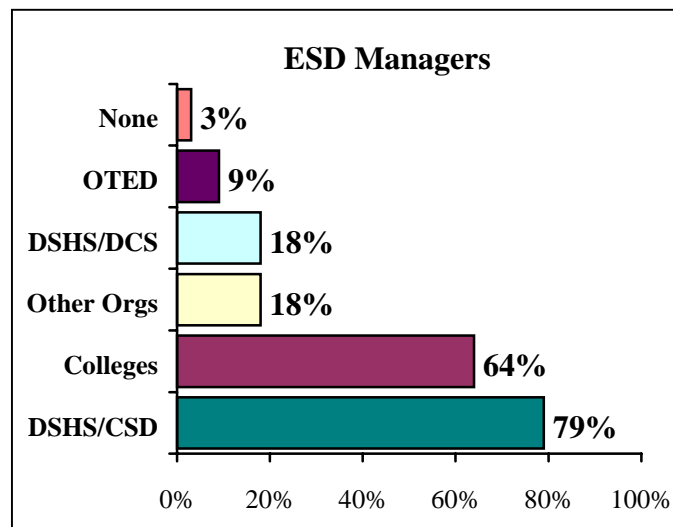
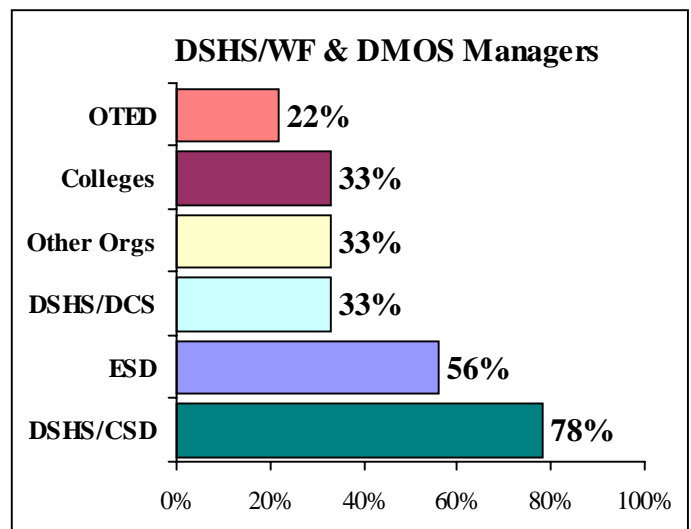
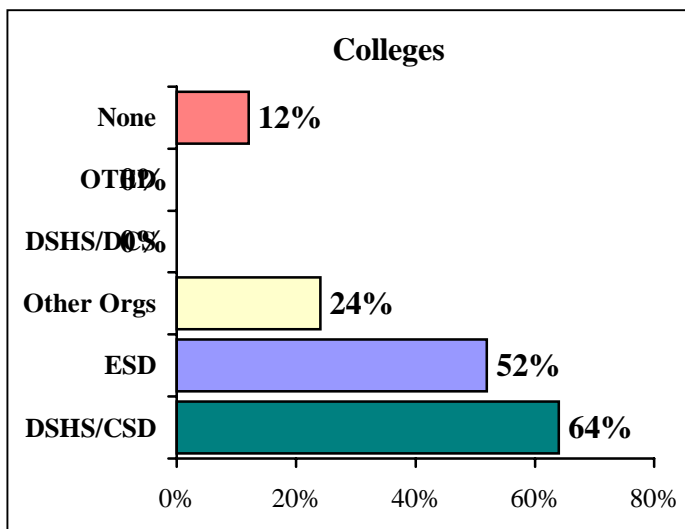
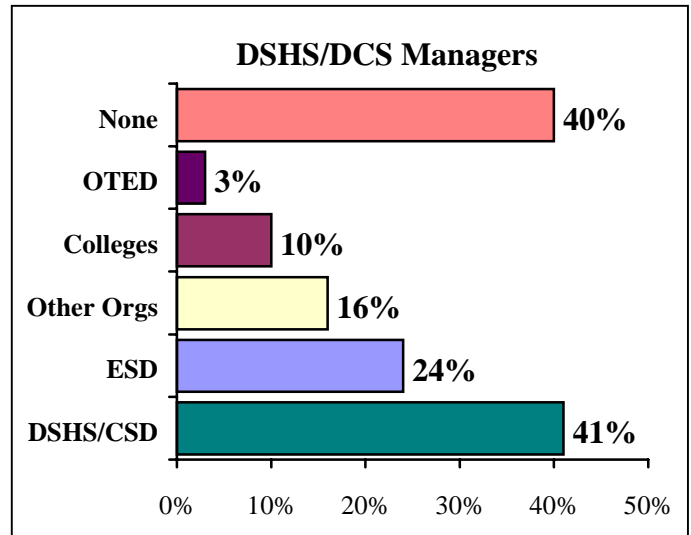
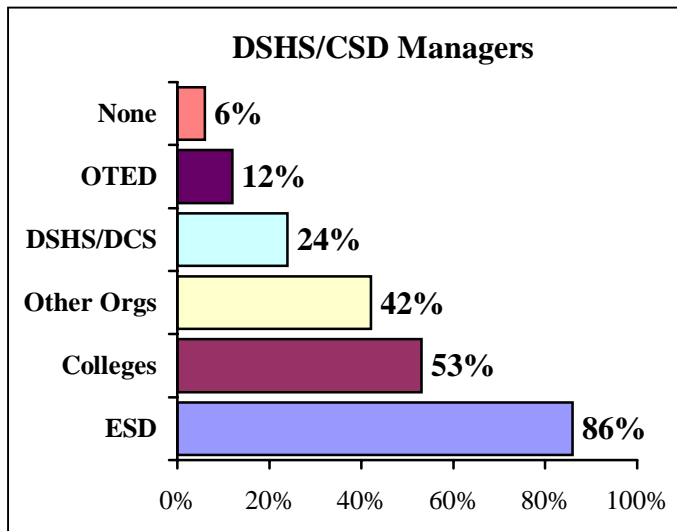


Eight percent (8%) of the Managers say all of their WorkFirst-related communication occurs **within** their organization. Nearly two-thirds (64%) say that at least half occurs **within** their organization. One-fourth (28%) say that less than half occurs **within** their organization.

On average, 71% of DSHS/CSD WorkFirst-related communication occurs **within** their organization, 66% of DSHS/WF & DMOS communication occurs **within** their organization, and 61% of ESD's. About half (47%) of the colleges' communication occurs **within** their organization and one-third (35%) of DSHS/DCS's.



**Q5. Which other WorkFirst partner agencies do you communicate with at least weekly?
By Organization**



Back-Up to Findings

This section provides detailed back-up for each of the key findings. The key findings are provided in bold.

1. **Strong majorities of managers agree that having good internal, local, and state-level WorkFirst communication is important, although managers place higher importance on internal and local WorkFirst communication than they do on state-level WorkFirst communication.**
2. **A strong majority of managers agree that there is good internal and local communication and four-in-ten managers agree that there is good communication at the state level, but one-third (33%) say they don't know.**
3. **Overall, managers also indicate that internal and local WorkFirst communication is more effective than state-level WorkFirst communication. However, once again, roughly a third of managers are not able to rate the effectiveness of state-level WorkFirst communication.**

Internal Communication

- Most (91%) managers agree that it is important that “there is good communication within [their] organization about WorkFirst-related issues” – 79% strongly agree.
- Three-fourths (76%) of the managers agree that there is good communication within their organization about WorkFirst-related issues – only one-in-five (19%) disagree.
- Most managers (81%) think WorkFirst related communication within their organization has stayed the same (46%) or gotten better (35%). Fewer than one-in-ten (9%), think communication has gotten worse.
- When asked how effective they think WorkFirst-related communication within their organization is, managers rank internal communication as a 2.68 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very effective” and 5 is “not at all effective.”

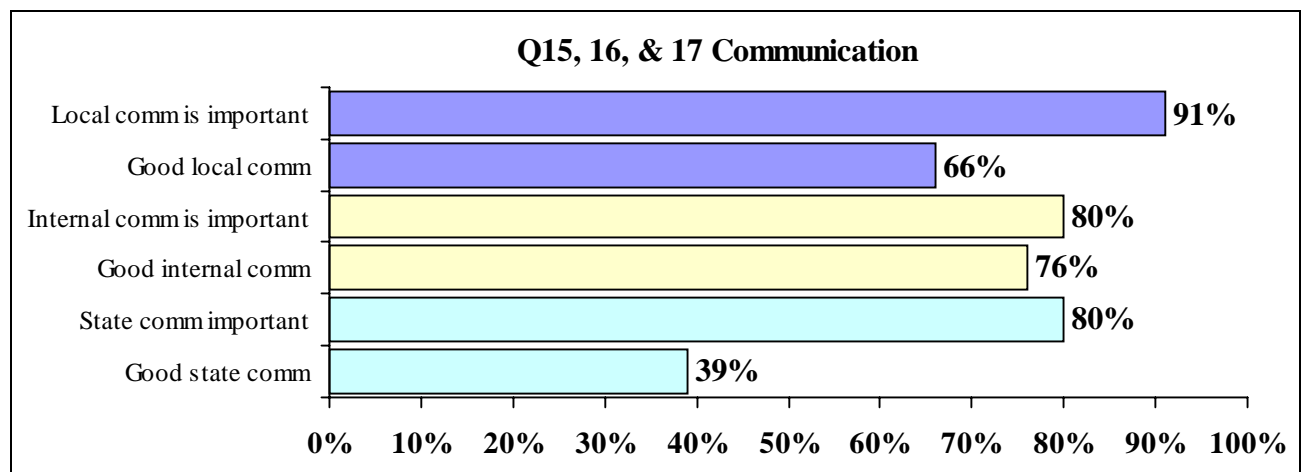
Local Communication

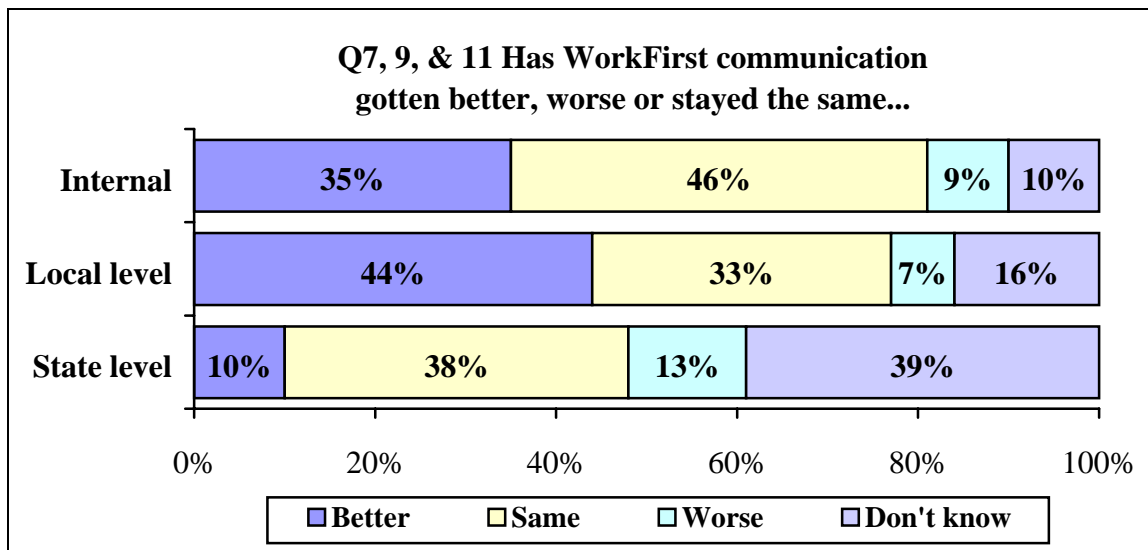
- Most (91%) managers agree that it is important that “there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the local level” – 80% strongly agree.
- Two-thirds (66%) of the managers agree that there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the local level – and 23% disagree.

- Three-fourths (77%) of the managers think local communication between WorkFirst partners has stayed the same or gotten better. Only 7% think communication has gotten worse.
- When asked how effective they think WorkFirst-related communication at the local level is, managers rank local communication as a 2.71 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very effective” and 5 is “not at all effective.”

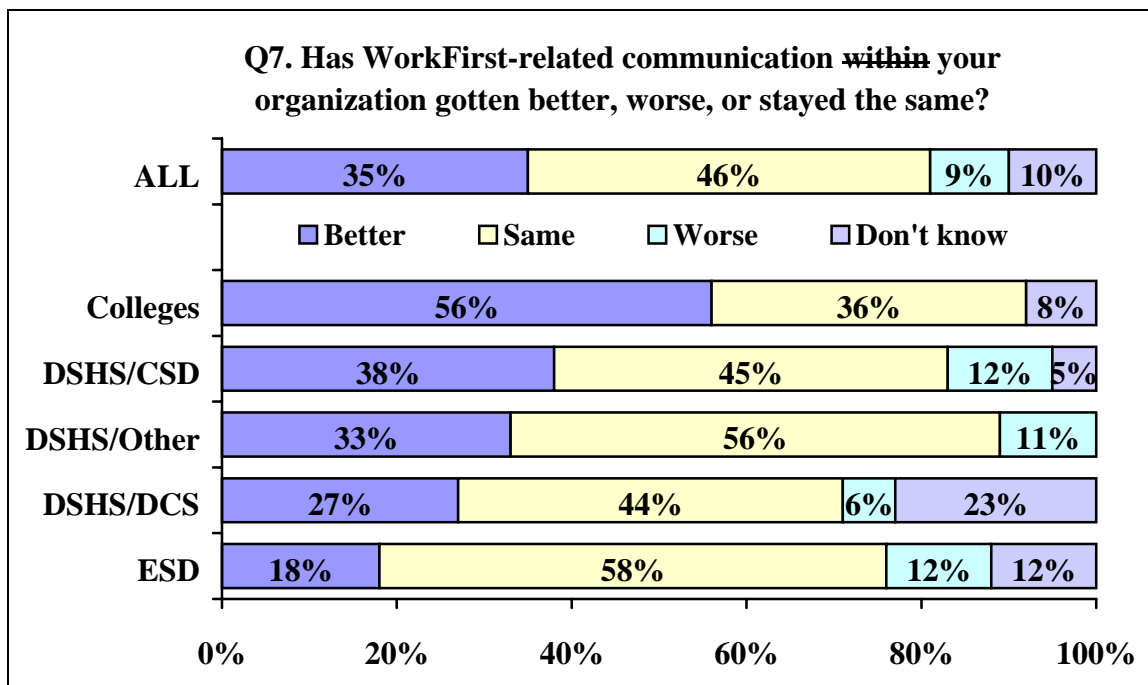
State-level Communication

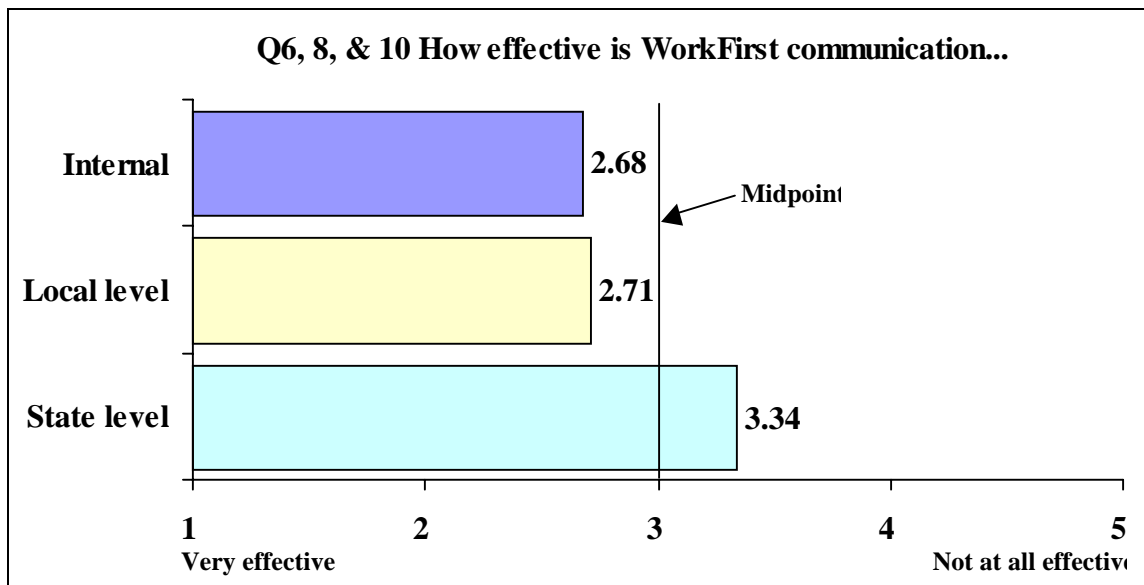
- Eight-in-ten (80%) managers agree that it is important that “there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the state level” – 64% strongly agree.
- By a 39% to 25% margin, managers agree that there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the state level – but one-third (33%) say they don’t know.
- Half (48%) of managers think state-level communication between WorkFirst partners has stayed the same or gotten better, 13% think communication has gotten worse, and 39% say they don’t know if communication has gotten better or worse.
- When asked how effective they think WorkFirst-related communication at the state level is, managers rank internal communication as a 3.34 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very effective” and 5 is “not at all effective.” One-third (32%) of the managers are unable to rate the effectiveness of state-level communication.





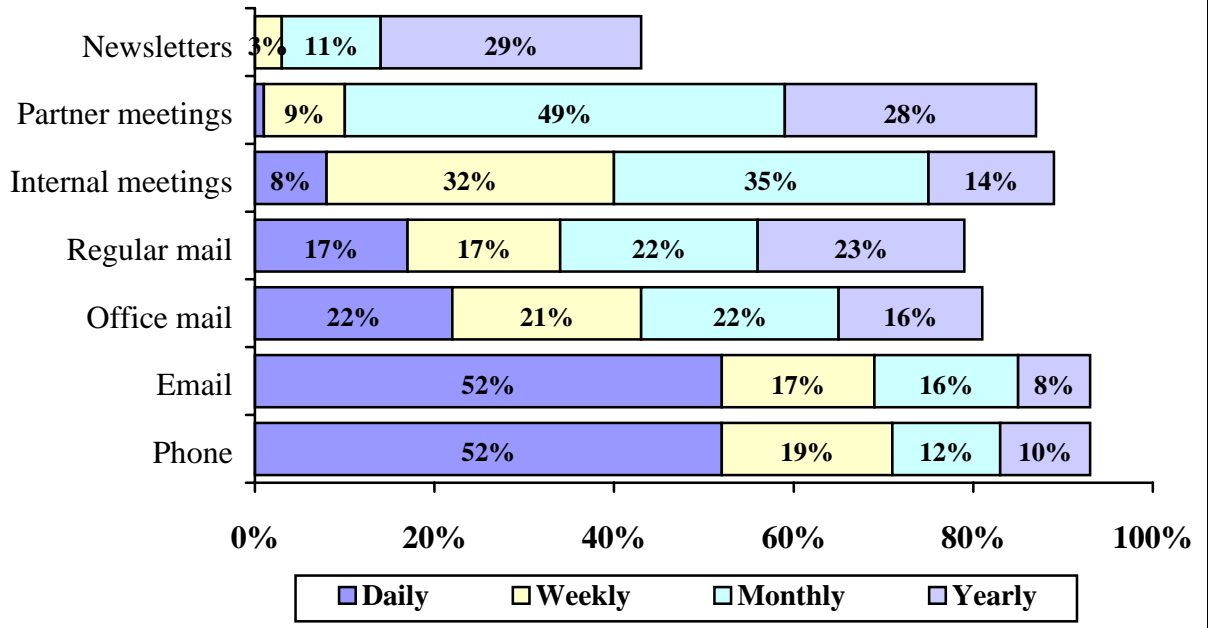
- Managers at the colleges are the most likely to think WorkFirst communication within their organization has gotten better (56%), followed by DSHS/CSD managers (38%), DSHS/Other managers (33%), and DSHS/DCS managers (27%). ESD managers are the least likely to say there has been improvement (18%).

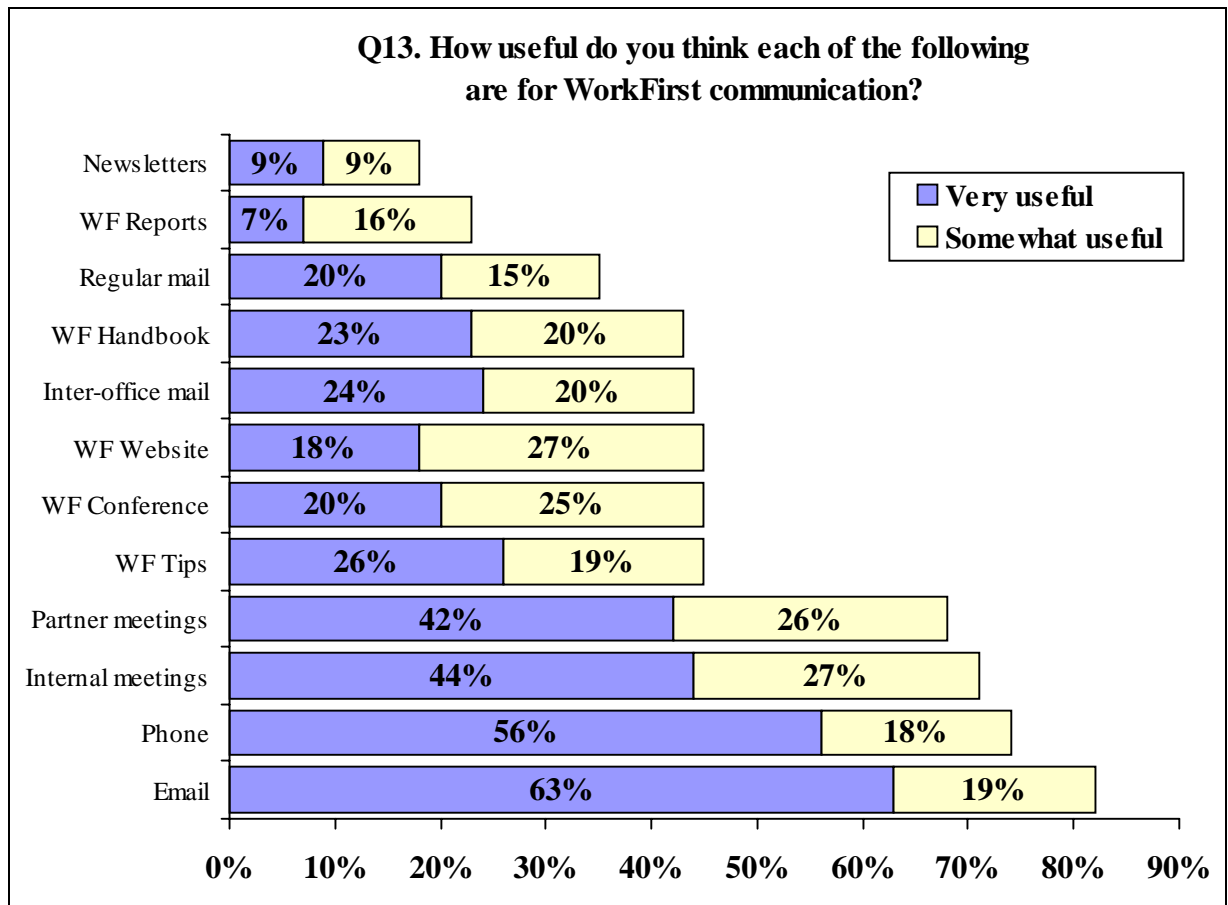




- 4. Phone and email are the most frequently used methods for WorkFirst communication, with a majority of managers using them on a daily basis. And email and phone are seen as the most useful methods for WorkFirst communication. Although internal and partner meetings are less frequent methods of communication, strong majorities of managers find both types of meetings to be useful.**
- A majority of managers (52%) say they use the phone for WorkFirst communication on a daily basis, and 19% say they use the phone on a weekly basis.
 - A strong majority (63%) of managers say that email is very useful for WorkFirst communication and another 19% say it is somewhat useful. A majority (56%) of managers say that the phone is very useful for WorkFirst communication and another 18% say it is somewhat useful.
 - Two-thirds (68%) of managers say partner meetings are very or somewhat useful and 71% say internal meetings are very or somewhat useful.

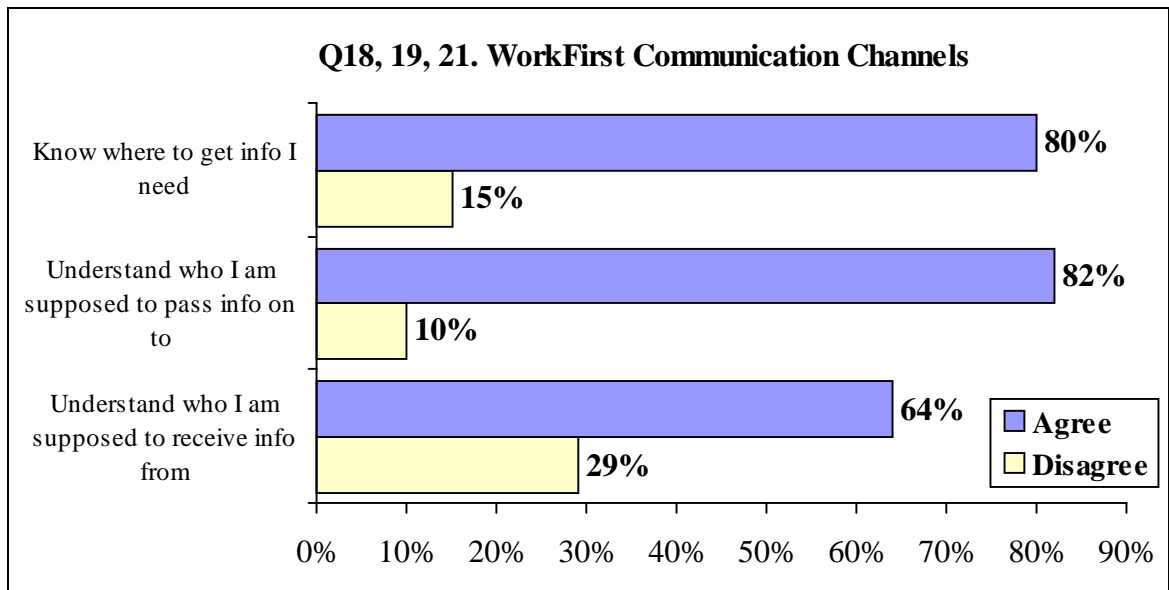
**Q12. How often do you use each of the following
for WorkFirst communication?**





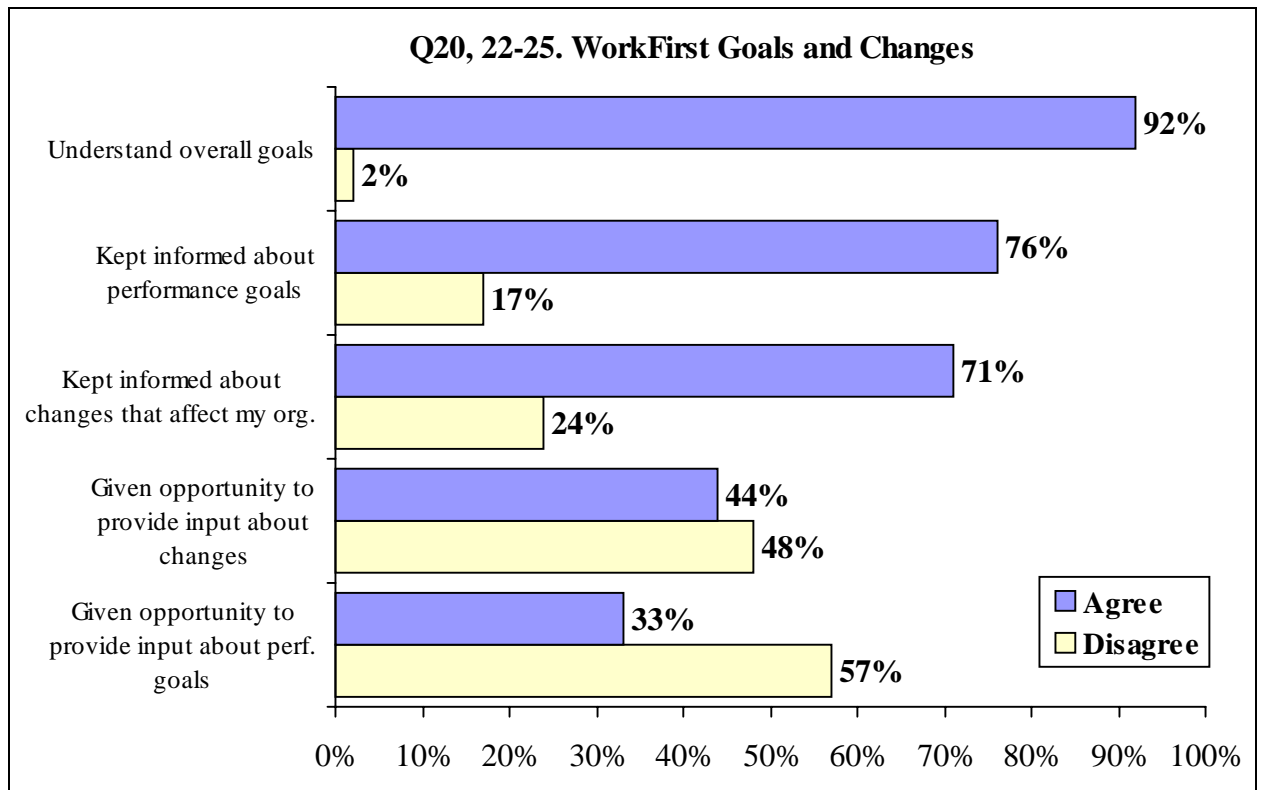
5. Managers are more likely to say they know whom they are supposed to pass different types of WorkFirst information on to than to know who they are supposed to receive different types of WorkFirst information from, although they feel that both these aspects of WorkFirst communication are equally important.

- Most managers (82%) agree that they understand whom they are supposed to pass different types of WorkFirst communication on to and a majority (64%) agrees that they understand whom they are supposed to receive different types of WorkFirst communication from. However, almost a third (29%) say they don't know whom they are supposed to receive information from.
- Most managers (80%) also agree that they know where to go to get the information they need about the WorkFirst program.



6. Most managers agree that they understand the overall goals of the WorkFirst program and strong majorities agree that they are kept informed about the performance goals for the WorkFirst program and about WorkFirst program changes that affect their organizations. However, roughly half of the managers do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about the performance goals or program changes that affect their organizations.

- Most (92%) managers agree that they understand the overall goals of the WorkFirst program, only 2% disagree.
- Three-fourths of managers (76%) agree that they are kept informed about the performance goals for the WorkFirst program, and 71% agree that they are kept informed about program changes that affect their organization.
- Half (48%) of the managers do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about program changes that affect their organization and 57% do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about performance goals.



Open End Responses

The open-end responses from the managers' survey appear in the Appendices.

Staff Survey

The Frause Group team developed a survey questionnaire to solicit information from staff involved in the WorkFirst program regarding internal communication. A copy of the questionnaire and the staff responses to the open ended questions are provided in the Appendices.

Background

The Frause Group team conducted the staff survey on September 27 through November 14, 2000, using a list of approximately 2,700 WorkFirst line staff compiled by the various WorkFirst partners and agencies.

To ensure a valid random sample of staff, we randomly pre-selected 418 staff out of the universe of 2,700 WorkFirst staff prior to the initial mailing and emailing of the survey. Only the results from these pre-selected staff were included in the final data set. This ensures a data set that is statistically projectable to the entire universe of WorkFirst staff. Using the small universe margin of error calculation, the overall margin of error for the manager survey results is ± 4.5 points at the 95% confidence interval.

We mailed the survey to the 418 pre-selected staff and sent emails to all 2,700 staff, to give them the opportunity to be included in the process even if their input is not part of the final data set. Comments and responses to open end questions for all staff who responded to the survey are included in the appendix.

Methodology

On September 27th we sent a total of 418 mail surveys to the pre-selected staff from the database. On October 3rd, we sent 2,700 email invitations to all staff in the database. The mail survey packet included the survey and a return envelope with postage. The mail survey also included instructions on how to complete the survey online at Evans/McDonough. The email invitations included a description of the goals of the project and a link to the web survey with instructions on how to complete the survey online.

All communications came from and were returned to Evans/McDonough and respondents were told that administrators in Olympia or any state staff would never see individual responses. This was done to ensure confidentiality and to encourage respondents to be honest and frank when filling out the survey.

Fifteen mail surveys were returned by the post office because of bad addresses and approximately 400 emails were returned as undeliverable. Those email addresses with obvious mistakes were fixed. After this approximately 360 bad email addresses remained. Fifteen staff were removed from the list because the person was no longer there or they

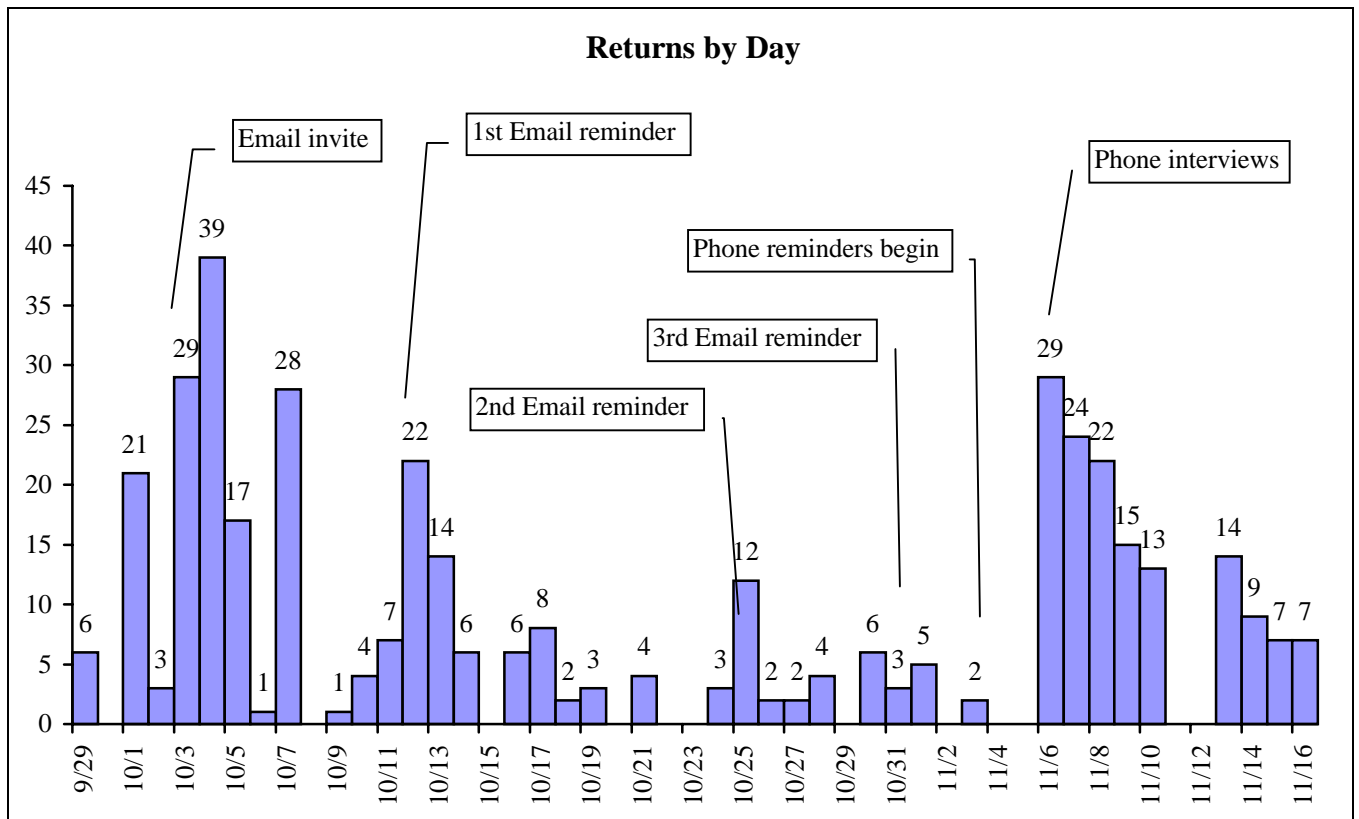
indicated that they were not involved in WorkFirst and 162 were removed because their names were in the database of WorkFirst managers.

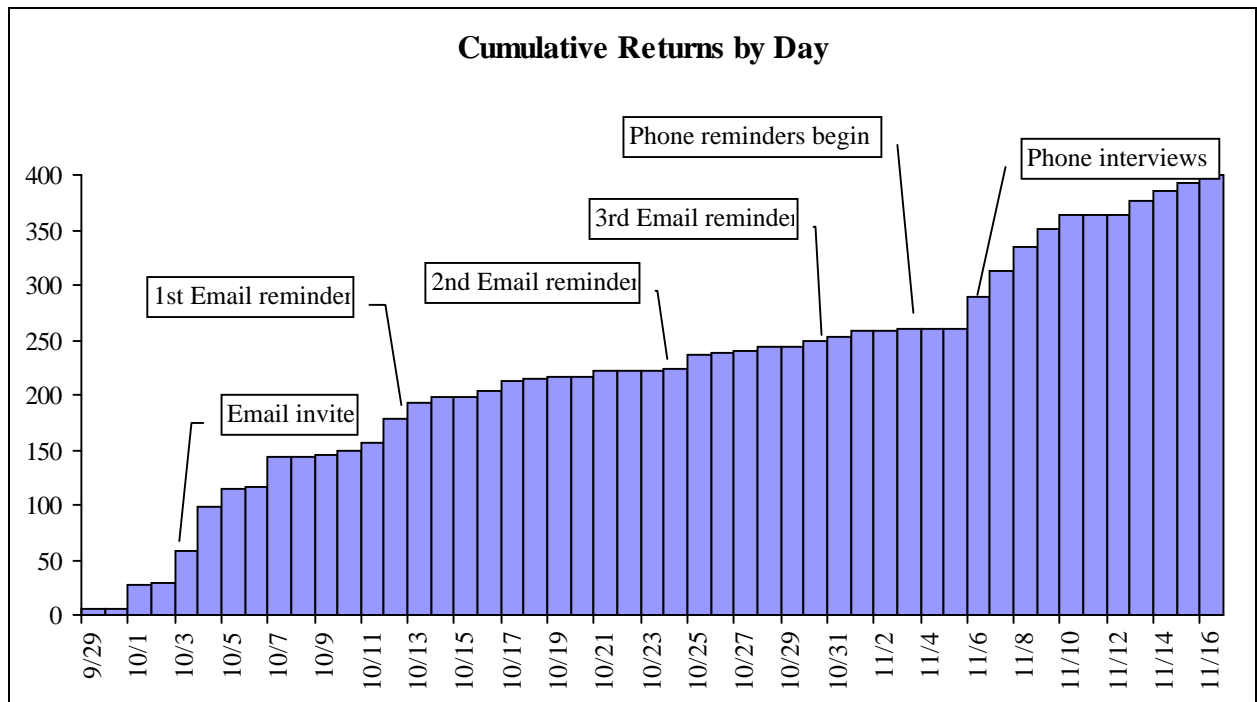
We sent email reminders out on October 12th, 24th, and 30th. Telephone reminder calls began on November 3rd to the remaining pre-selected staff with outstanding surveys. On November 4th, we began contacting by phone the remaining pre-selected staff who had still not completed the survey.

Timeline

Date	Action
September 27 th	surveys mailed to all 418 pre-selected staff
October 3 rd	email invitations sent to all 2,700 staff
October 12 th	First email reminder sent to remaining pre-selected staff
October 24 th	Second email reminder sent to remaining pre-selected staff
October 30 th	Third email reminder sent to remaining pre-selected staff
November 3 rd	Phone reminders to remaining pre-selected staff begin
November 6 th	Phone interviewing to remaining pre-selected staff begins
November 16 th	400 pre-selected staff surveys completed

The next two graphs show the returns by day and by type (Mail, Web, or Phone).





Key Findings

Upon review of staff responses to the survey, the Frause Group team identified six key findings relating to internal communications at the staff level.

1. **Strong majorities of staff agree that having good internal, local, and state-level WorkFirst communication is important, although staff place higher importance on internal and local WorkFirst communication than they do on state-level WorkFirst communication.**
2. **A strong majority of staff agree that there is good internal and local communication and three-in-ten staff agree that there is good communication at the state level, but one-half (50%) say they don't know.**
3. **Overall, staff also indicate that internal and local WorkFirst communication is more effective than state-level WorkFirst communication. However, once again, roughly one half of all staff are not able to rate the effectiveness of state-level WorkFirst communication.**
4. **Phone and email are the most frequently used methods for WorkFirst communication. And, email and phone are seen as the most useful methods for WorkFirst communication. Although internal and partner meets are less**

frequent methods of communication, significant majorities of staff find both types of meetings to be useful.

5. Staff are more likely to say they know who they are supposed to pass different types of WorkFirst information on to than to know who they are supposed to receive different types of WorkFirst information from, although they feel that both these aspects of WorkFirst communication are equally important.
6. Most staff agree that they understand the overall goals of the WorkFirst program and strong majorities agree that they are kept informed about the performance goals for the WorkFirst program and about WorkFirst program changes that affect their organizations. However, roughly half of the staff do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about the performance goals or program changes that affect their organizations.

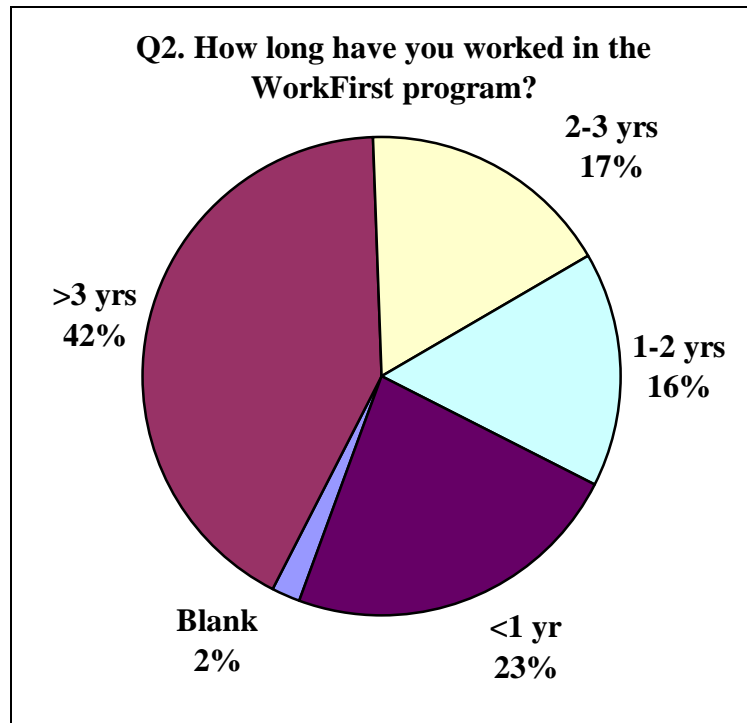
Profile of Respondents

A majority (58%) of the responses were from staff in DSHS, 20% came from ESD, 13% came from the colleges, and 9.5% from OTED. This data has been weighted to reflect the overall percentages by organization in the staff database as a whole.

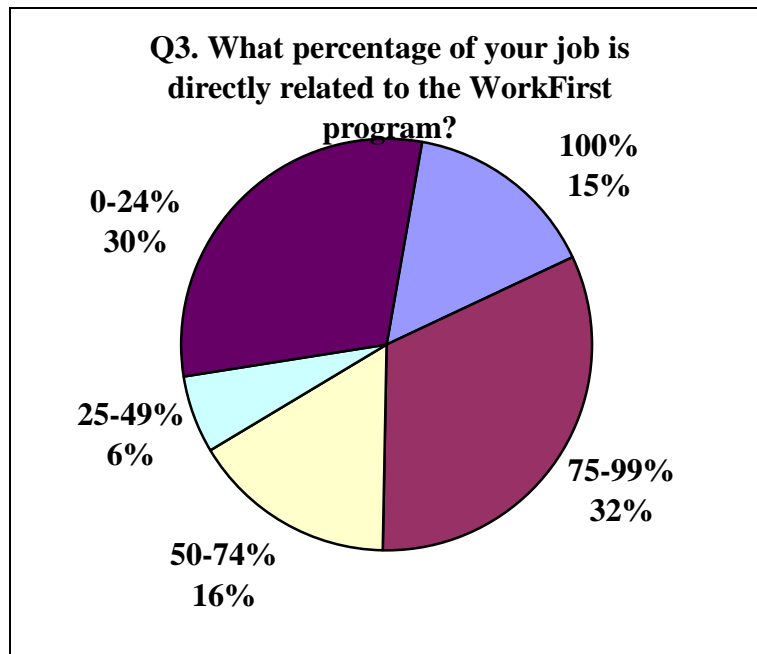
Returns By Organization

Agency/Organization	Database	Pre-selected
DSHS	86.2%	58.1%
ESD	10.8%	19.5%
Colleges/Other	2.7%	13.0%
OTED	0.4%	9.5%

Nearly half of the respondents (42%) had worked in the WorkFirst program for more than 3 years, 17% between 2 and 3 years, 16% between 1 and 2 years, 7% between 6 months and a year, and 16% less than 6 months.

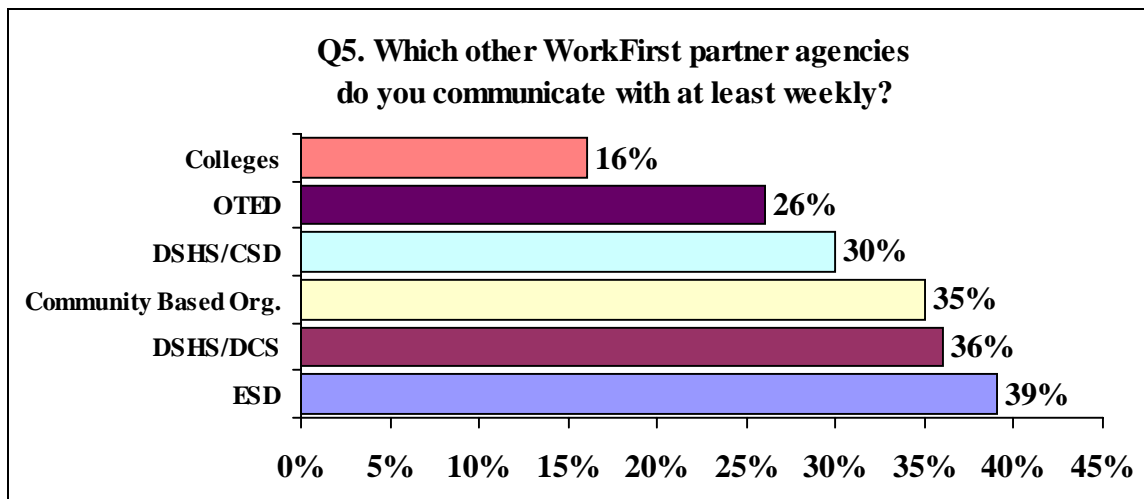


Overall, 63% of the staff surveyed say that 50% or more of their job is WorkFirst related and 15% say that 100% of their job is WorkFirst related. Of those that say 100% of their job is WorkFirst related, 35% are from DSHS/DCS, 31% are from DSHS/CSD, 29% are from ESD, 1% are from OTED, and 5% are from the colleges or other agencies.



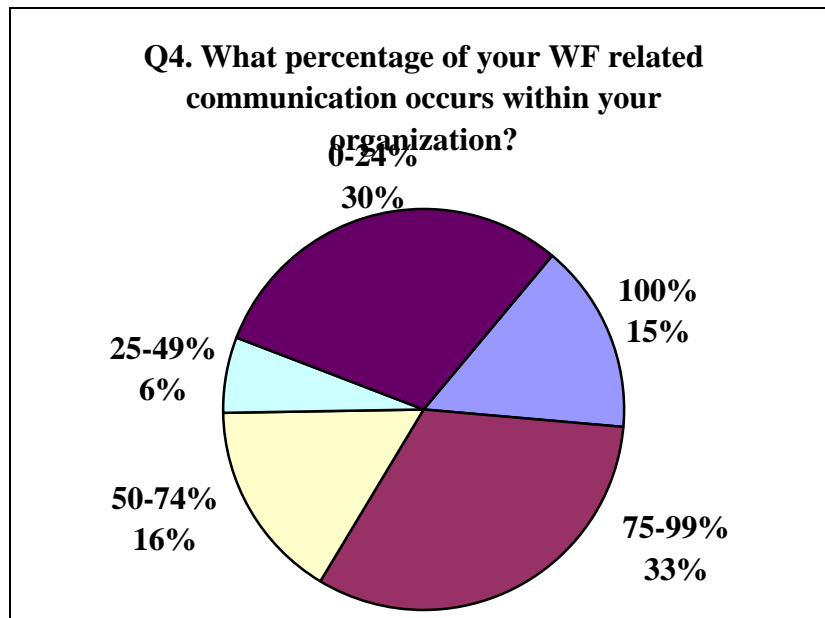
OTED (98%), ESD (91%) and the colleges (81%) staff report the highest average level of WorkFirst involvement and DSHS/DCS (58%) and DSHS/CSD (40%) report the lowest average level of WorkFirst involvement.

Overall, four-in-ten staff (39%) say they communicate with ESD at least weekly, 36% with DSHS/CSD, and 35% say the communicate with Community Based Organizations at least weekly. Staff are least likely to communicate with the Colleges on a regular basis (16%).

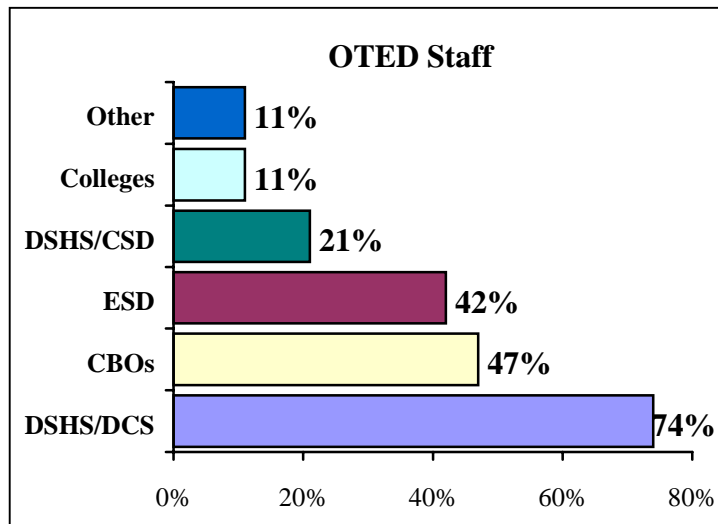
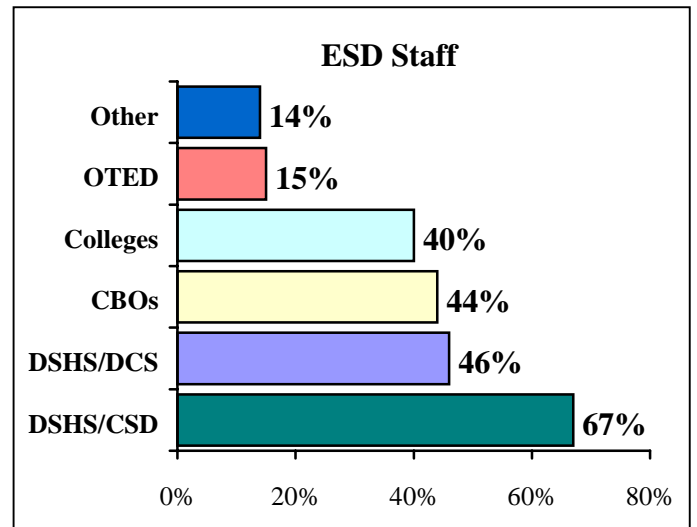
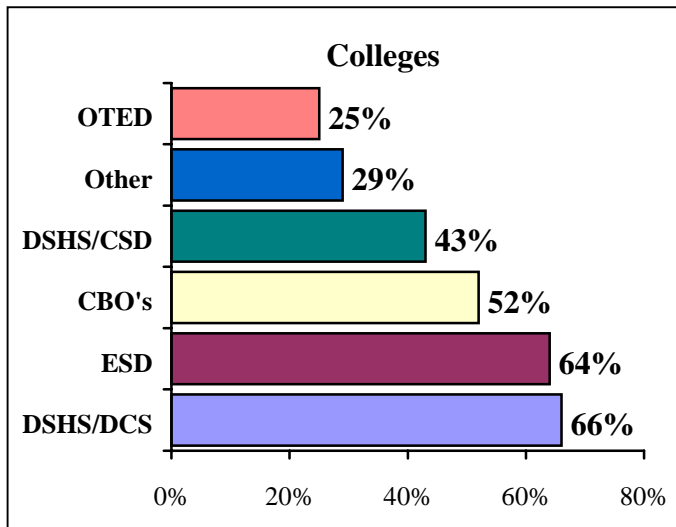
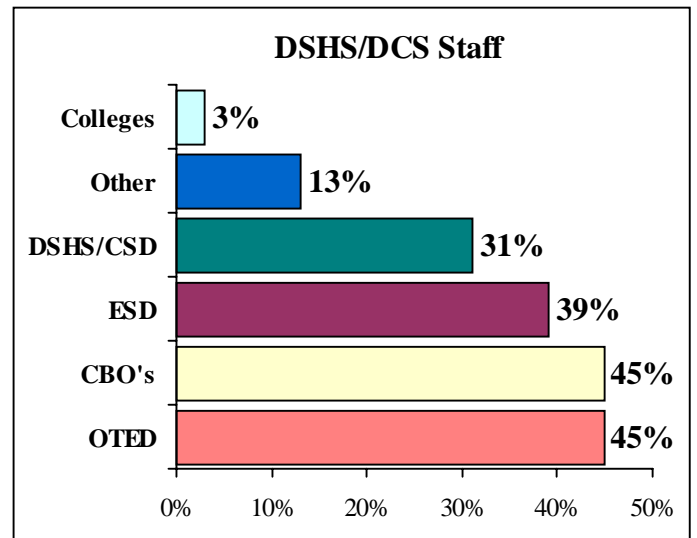
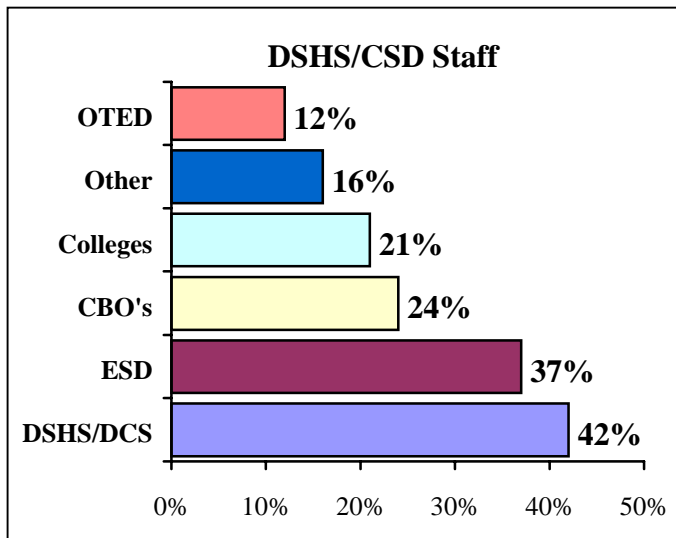


Fifteen percent (15%) of the staff say all of their WorkFirst-related communication occurs **within** their organization. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say that at least half occurs **within** their organization. One-third (36%) say that less than half occurs **within** their organization.

On average, 73% of OTED WorkFirst-related communication occurs **within** their organization, 71% of ESD communication occurs **within** their organization. Over half (57%) of DSHS/DCS communication occurs **within** their organization (56%) of the colleges' and (51%) of DSHS/CSD's.



**Q5. Which other WF partner agencies do you communicate with at least weekly?
By Organization**



Back-up to Findings

This section provides detailed back-up for each of the key findings identified above.

- 1. Strong majorities of staff agree that having good internal, local, and state-level WorkFirst communication is important, although staff place higher importance on internal and local WorkFirst communication than they do on state-level WorkFirst communication.**
- 2. A strong majority of staff agree that there is good internal and local communication and three-in-ten staff agree that there is good communication at the state level, but one-half (50%) say they don't know.**
- 3. Overall, staff also indicate that internal and local WorkFirst communication is more effective than state-level WorkFirst communication. However, once again, roughly one half of all staff are not able to rate the effectiveness of state-level WorkFirst communication.**

Internal Communication

- Three-fourths (76%) of staff agree that it is important that “there is good communication within [their] organization about WorkFirst-related issues” – 62% strongly agree.
- Two-thirds (62%) of the staff agree that there is good communication within their organization about WorkFirst-related issues – only one-in-five (21%) disagree.
- Most staff (71%) think WorkFirst related communication within their organization has stayed the same (36%) or gotten better (35%). Fewer than one-in-ten (7%), think communication has gotten worse.
- When asked how effective they think WorkFirst-related communication within their organization is, staff rank internal communication as a 2.68 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very effective” and 5 is “not at all effective.”

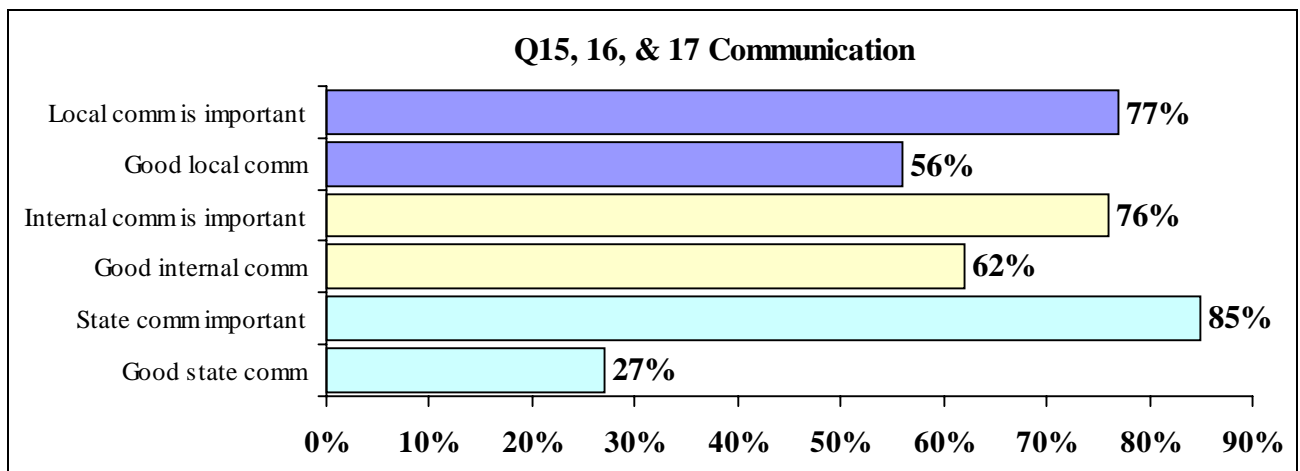
Local Communication

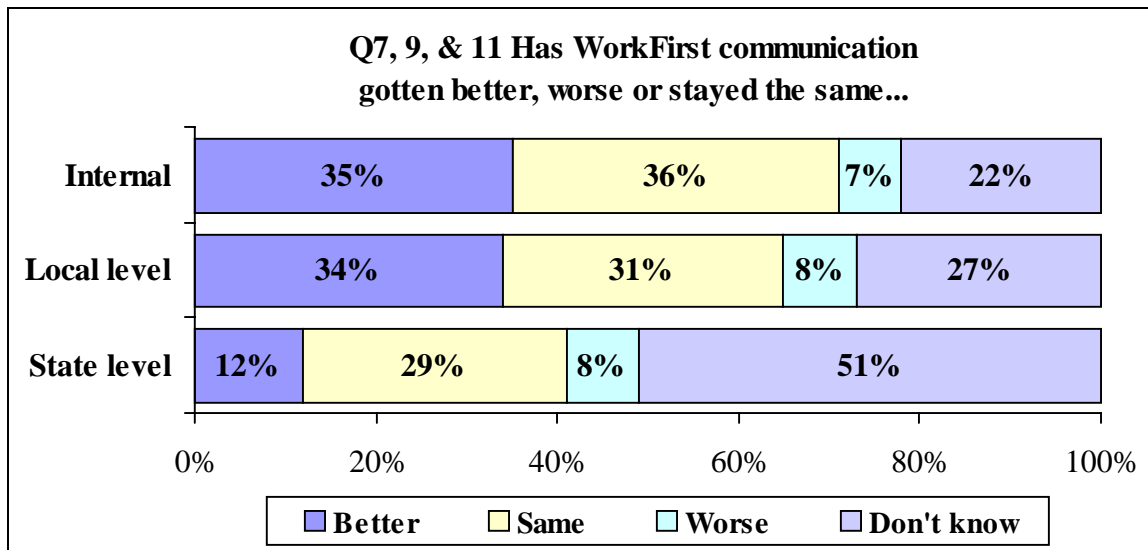
- Three-fourths (77%) of the staff agree that it is important that “there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the local level” – 65% strongly agree.
- Over half (56%) of the staff agree that there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the local level – and 19% disagree.

- Two-thirds (65%) of the staff think that local communication between WorkFirst partners has stayed the same or gotten better. Only 8% think communication has gotten worse.
- When asked how effective they think WorkFirst-related communication at the local level is, staff rank local communication as a 2.76 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very effective” and 5 is “not at all effective.”

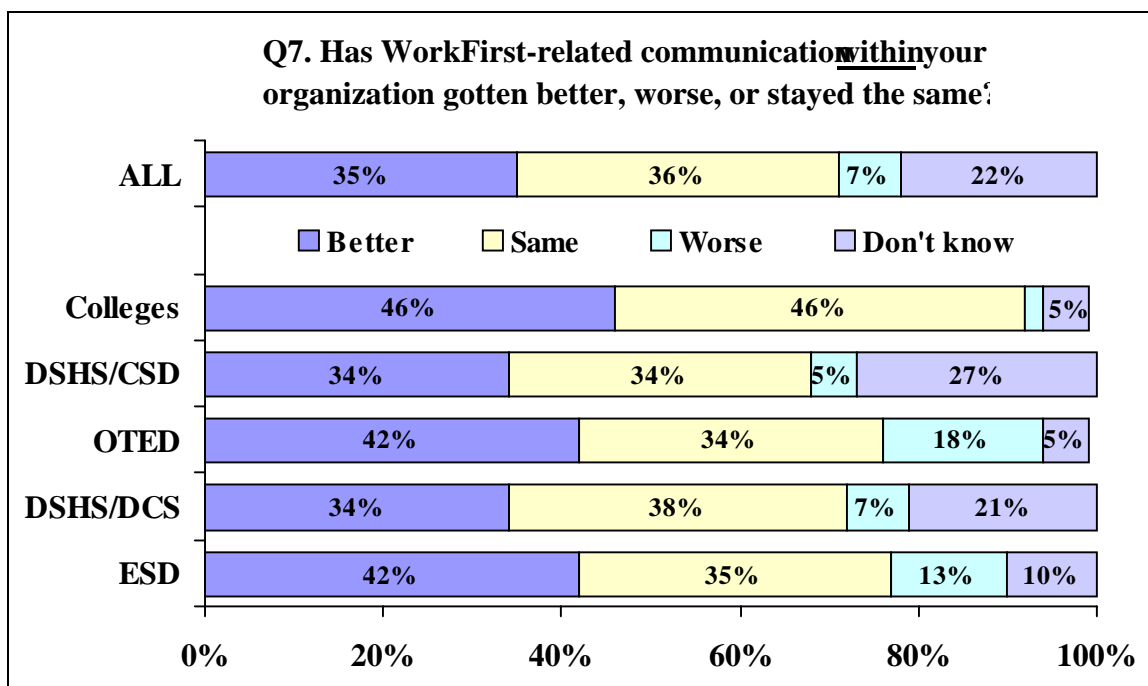
State-level Communication

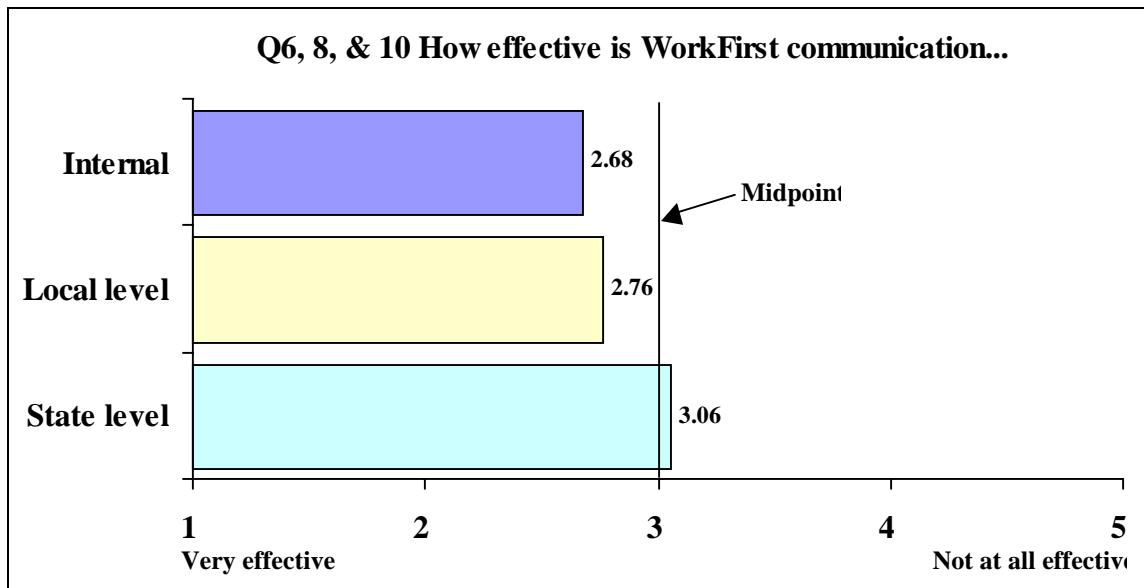
- Six-in-ten (64%) staff agree that it is important that “there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the state level” – 46% strongly agree.
- By a 27% to 23% margin, staff agree that there is good communication between WorkFirst partners at the state level – but one-half (50%) say they don’t know.
- Four in ten (41%) of staff think state-level communication between WorkFirst partners has stayed the same or gotten better, 8% think communication has gotten worse, and 51% say they don’t know if communication has gotten better or worse.
- When asked how effective they think WorkFirst-related communication at the state level is, staff rank internal communication as a 3.06 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very effective” and 5 is “not at all effective.” Nearly one-half (46%) of the staff are unable to rate the effectiveness of state-level communication.





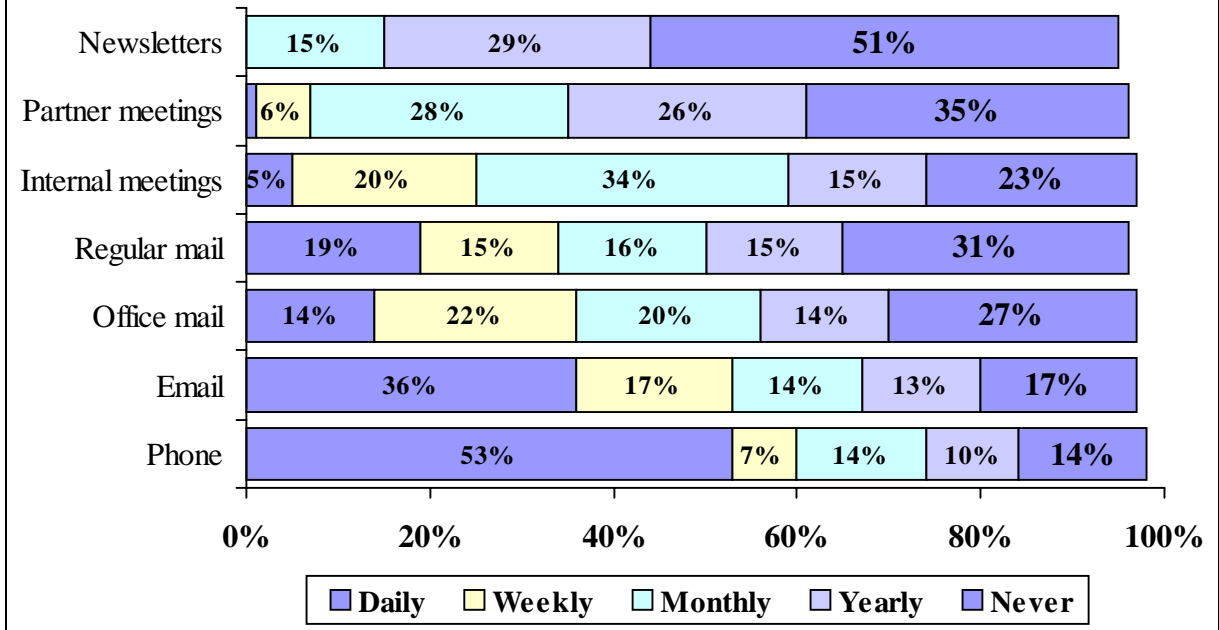
- Staff at the colleges are the most likely to think WorkFirst communication within their organization has gotten better (46%), followed by ESD staff (42%), OTED staff (42%), and DSHS/DCS/CSD staff (34%).

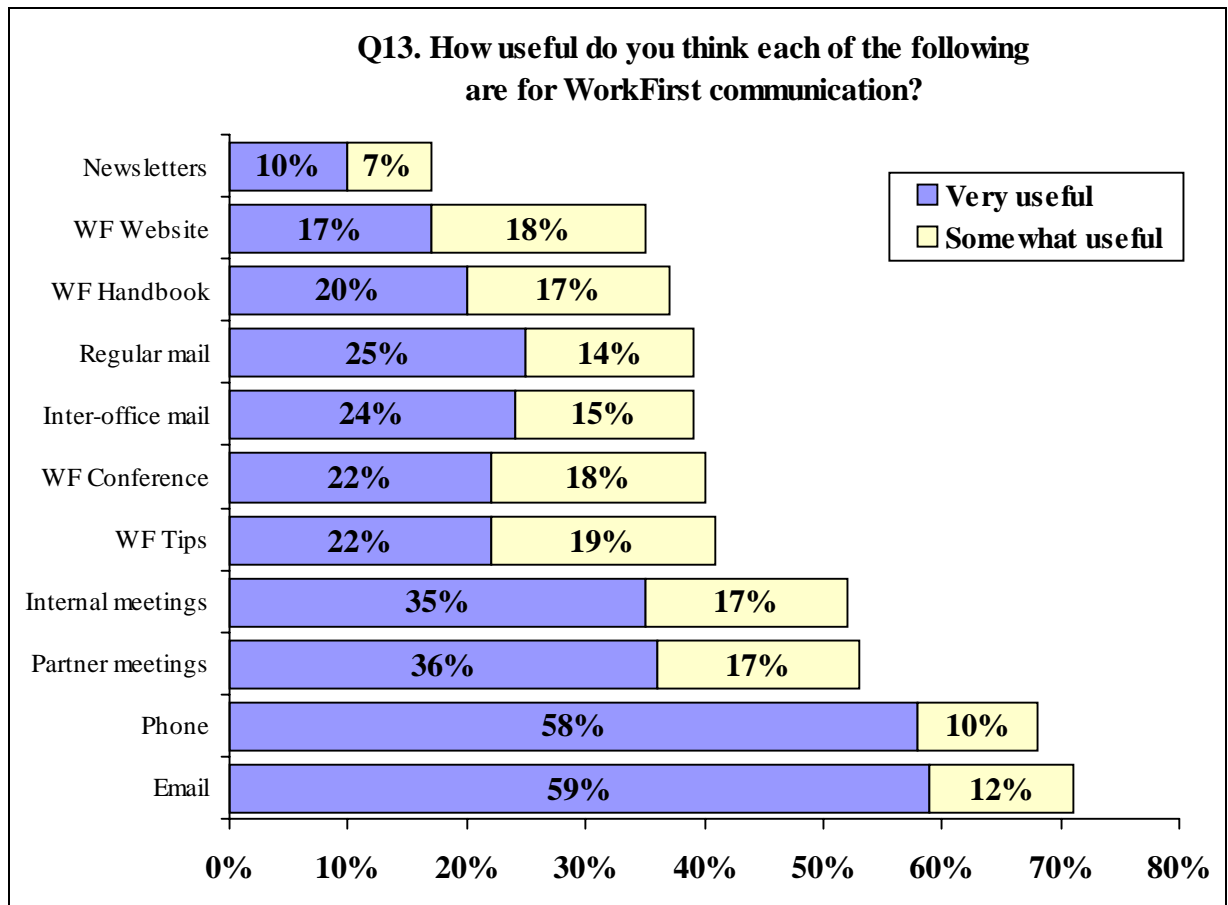




- 4. Phone and email are the most frequently used methods for WorkFirst communication. And email and phone are seen as the most useful methods for WorkFirst communication. Although internal and partner meetings are less frequent methods of communication, significant majorities of staff find both types of meetings to be useful.**
- A majority of staff (53%) say they use the phone for WorkFirst communication on a daily basis, and 7% say they use the phone on a weekly basis.
 - A strong majority (59%) of staff say that email is very useful for WorkFirst communication and another 12% say it is somewhat useful. A majority (58%) of staff say that the phone is very useful for WorkFirst communication and another 10% say it is somewhat useful.
 - Half (53%) of staff say partner meetings are very or somewhat useful and 52% say internal meetings are very or somewhat useful.

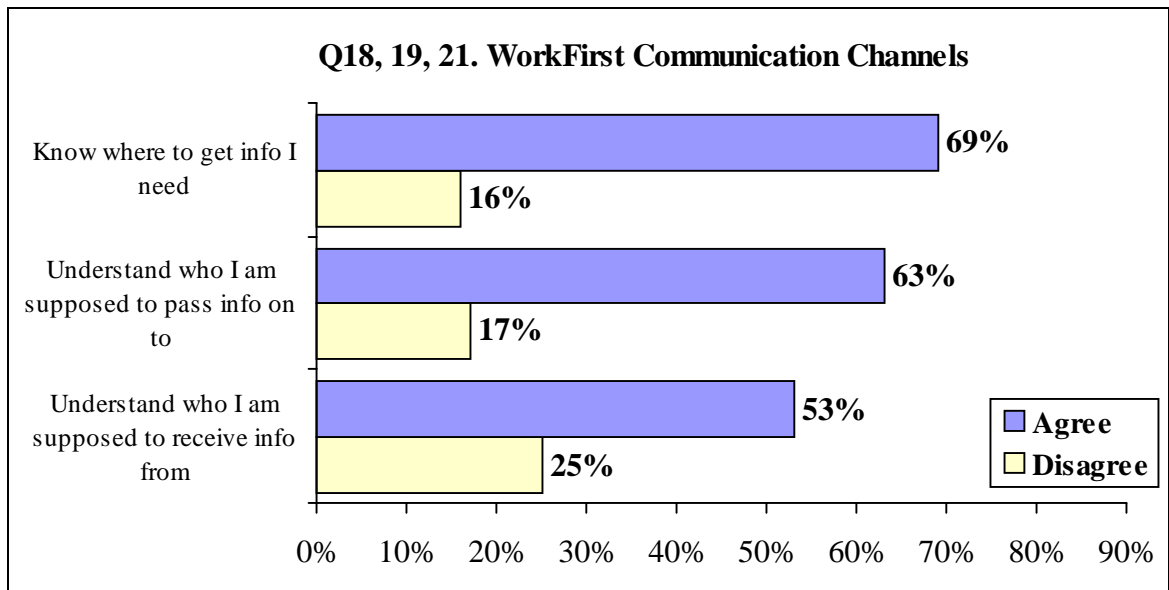
**Q12. How often do you use each of the following
for WorkFirst communication?**





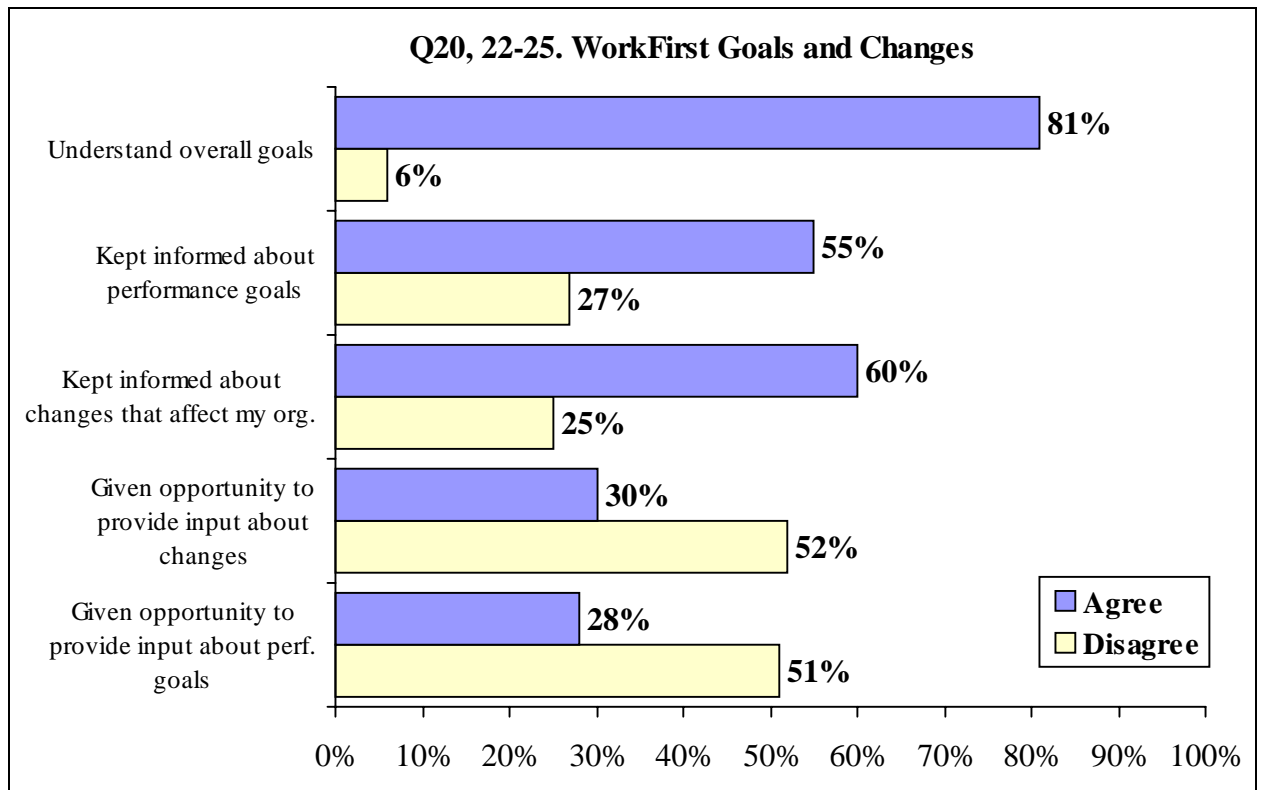
5. Staff are more likely to say they know whom they are supposed to pass different types of WorkFirst information on to than to know who they are supposed to receive different types of WorkFirst information from, although they feel that both these aspects of WorkFirst communication are equally important.

- A majority (63%) agree that they understand who they are supposed to pass different types of WorkFirst communication on to and half (53%) agree that they understand who they are supposed to receive different types of WorkFirst communication from. However, a fourth (25%) say they don't know whom they are supposed to receive information from.
- Most staff (69%) also agree that they know where to go to get the information they need about the WorkFirst program.



6. Most staff agree that they understand the overall goals of the WorkFirst program and strong majorities agree that they are kept informed about the performance goals for the WorkFirst program and about WorkFirst program changes that affect their organizations. However, roughly half of the staff do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about the performance goals or program changes that affect their organizations.

- Most (81%) staff agree that they understand the overall goals of the WorkFirst program, only 6% disagree.
- More than half of staff (55%) agree that they are kept informed about the performance goals for the WorkFirst program, and 60% agree that they are kept informed about program changes that affect their organization.
- Half (52%) of the staff do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about program changes that affect their organization and 51% do not feel that they are given the opportunity to provide input about performance goals.



Open End Responses

The open-end responses from the staff survey appear in the Appendices.

Focus Groups

The Frause Group team conducted two focus groups among WorkFirst managers and staff in Seattle and Spokane. We conducted the Seattle focus groups on December 12, 2000 at 11:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. The Spokane focus groups were held on December 13, 2000 at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. We recruited participants for the groups from WorkFirst manager and staff lists compiled by participating WorkFirst agencies.

We screened participants for agency and percent of job relating to the WorkFirst program. We did not consider individuals who identified themselves as working less than 15% of their jobs with WorkFirst. The screening criterion that we used to select these groups is included in the Appendices. We segregated participants by position within the WorkFirst program, with two sessions of each managers and staff.

We provided participants with lunch and light refreshments. We videotaped all of the focus groups (Original tapes are stored at the offices of Evans/McDonough). We distributed copies of the videotape to other parties involved with the WorkFirst performance team. Use of the videotapes is limited to research analysis and presentation.

Focus groups are, by design, qualitative research and are not a substitute for quantitative research. Focus groups permit the observation of participants' thinking process, language, and reactions to various themes, messages, and strategies. The results of these focus groups provide insight into attitudes and behaviors of WorkFirst employees regarding the communication issues discussed.

Key Findings

During the focus groups, The Frause Group team identified four key findings. These findings are presented below along with further details regarding specific observations relating to each finding.

- 1. There were more similarities between the groups based on job positions within the WorkFirst program rather than geographic proximity. Both the manager groups and the staff groups acknowledged that there is a breakdown of communication between the state and local levels. Managers were more likely to identify specific obstacles to communication flow from the highest levels, while staff placed a greater emphasis on the communication problems within their individual CSOs and local partners.**

Managers: The most common problem described by the managers involved the gap in communication between the state level and policy setting committees and the actual administration of the program. One participant mentioned the need for program integration from the top down and the need for information to be accessible in different areas. Another felt that there are conflicting vision and

missions among agencies and suggested the need for a clear and unifying philosophy for the program to facilitate communication between them. Managers mention data sharing issues (confidentiality) and technological differences between and within agencies as obstacles to better communication. Most participants felt like they don't have all of the information available and it would be too much additional work to track this information. The managers feel as if they have no impact on decision-making and policy setting for the overall program, and they routinely receive WorkFirst information "after-the-fact."

Staff: Most of the staff identified their role in WorkFirst communication as the "bottom of the pyramid". The staff cited their contact with supervisors and peers as the most useful source of information about the WorkFirst program. Both staff groups remarked on the need to follow the "chain of command" when communicating about WorkFirst. There were mixed feelings about email with some finding it useful, but most suggesting that they are overwhelmed by email communication and are likely to prioritize based on the name attached to the email. The staff members from Seattle were more likely than their Spokane counterparts to identify the importance of meetings (both internal and partnership) for the dissemination of information about WorkFirst.

2. **Managers indicated that they understood WorkFirst communication channels and overall program goals, but feel as if there are conflicting messages regarding performance goals and program changes. Staff are unclear about any formal communication channels and feel that WorkFirst information transfers in a "trickle down" manner. Program goals, performance goals, and program changes are generally unclear to staff, and perceived as in constant flux.**

Both the managers and the staff feel as if changes are made without input from the field, and by the time the change reaches the managers and staff the decisions have already been made. They express concern that the impact of the changes are often not considered in advance, and can affect staff and clients in a negative way.

Managers: The managers indicated that they knew who to pass WorkFirst information on to within their offices. Managers mentioned that they are not really certain as to the formal structure of where the information comes from at the state level, or who else is receiving the information that they receive. The managers feel that they understand the overall program goals, but note that they are occasionally in conflict with each other.

Managers feel well informed of the performance goals and affirm that they receive them regularly from the state WorkFirst office. The managers feel that they are removed from the process of setting the performance goals. They state their understanding of the necessity of setting numerical goals, but agree that they

do not understand where or how the numbers are derived. Several participating managers mentioned frustration with the fact that they are often given new performance goals without any new tools to reach those goals. One participant stated that when they receive new performance measures they are guessing about what went wrong, and in turn guessing about how to fix it.

Managers mentioned their concern with program changes when they occur without consideration of the outside contractors. They found that the Local Area Planning regions are helping to provide input and communication regarding program changes.

The Spokane managers stated frustration with the viewpoint that WorkFirst policy is set in Olympia and changes are often based on what is happening in the Western half of the state, but the program changes are changes which effect the entire state.

Staff: The staff agreed that they are the last step in the communication channel, and they are uncertain as to what occurs on other levels. They stated that they receive communication from their supervisors and communicate informally with people in their offices. The staff feel as if there is a chain-of-command through which communication filters down to them. The staff indicated that they feel as if every person has different information, and they are never certain as to whether their knowledge is the most current. The staff mentioned that they are uncertain as to whether information makes it all the way up the channels, because they rarely get feedback back down. They mentioned that they thought there were mechanisms in place for them to communicate up the chain of command, but they never receive any indication that those messages are considered or even received.

Staff responded that they have some concept of overall program goals, but that it depends on who you are and where you are located. They responded that the program goals are constantly changing, and they aren't ever certain that they have the most updated information.

The majority of WorkFirst staff said that communication about performance goals gets to them through meetings, managers or team leads, and LAP groups. They said that the performance measures are out of their hands, and they have a general (or less) sense of what they actually are. Several people stated that they have no input, and view performance goals as "something they get". One staff person suggested that performance measures create a competition for statistics among and within agencies.

Program changes are viewed by the staff as taking too long to "trickle down" and happening too frequently. Most staff stated that they usually find out about program changes well after they occur, and don't find out about them until it presents a problem. The most common way for staff to find out about program changes is by talking to their co-workers.

3. **Among managers and staff, the most effective method of communication was identified as that occurring among personal contacts. Managers also mention Local Planning Areas as a useful method of communicating WorkFirst information. Staff is divided about the effectiveness of email, and favor communication through personal contacts or telephone.**

Managers: Managers agree that the most effective method of WorkFirst communication is through person contacts. Many managers will not read emails unless they recognize the sender as someone important. They stated that their relationships are with people, not agencies, and they need to feel as if they can proceed with open and safe communication.

The majority of managers stated that they do not use the WorkFirst website regularly or have never used it. Most agencies have their own internal and external website in addition to the WorkFirst website. The managers do not feel as if they need more information about WorkFirst, but are interested in the idea of a central resource hosting the most complete and updated information possible, including contact information for WorkFirst employees. Managers suggested that if the site were designed to send them email alerts on topics of importance they would find that useful.

Seattle area managers specifically mentioned that local planning areas have made communication more manageable, and have been working very well to improve communication.

Spokane area managers mentioned technology issues as obstacles to communication, particularly antiquated email systems.

Staff: Personal contacts are the highest rated method of communication among participating WorkFirst staff. Staff expressed that typically they identify someone that can help them and then return to that person again and again as an information resource. They are also likely to turn to their contact for references to other contacts. Seattle staff also find that internal meetings and partner meetings are effective ways of communicating, while Spokane staff find making a phone call can be one of the most effective methods of communication.

4. **Managers generally agreed that co-location could improve internal WorkFirst communication, as well as operating under clear lines of authority, and having an online directory. Staff felt that updated technology systems along with the attitudes of supervisors and administrators are central to the effectiveness of WorkFirst communication.**

Managers: The majority of managers agree that co-location would be very beneficial for both workers and clients, although they expressed concern about where the resources (financial, staff, and work space) would come from to accomplish this. Managers gave examples of situations where co-location already exists and works very well. Managers also suggested the need for clearer lines of authority when it comes to explaining WorkFirst policy and changes. Managers agreed that an online directory would be useful.

Staff: Staff felt that improvement in WorkFirst communication is related to the administrators. The philosophy from supervisors and administrators would have to be one of collaboration (with partners), rather than competition or secrecy. The staff mentioned that there still exists a philosophy of protecting one's turf, and this would have to be overcome for communication to improve.

Staff mentioned that there are several different data management systems that they use, and spend too much time duplicating the same information for every system. They would like to see a more coherent data-sharing program that would be easily transferable among agencies or partners.

Staff also generally favored co-location, but expressed concern for issues of confidentiality (3rd party contractors). Staff would also like to use an online directory, provided their supervisors approved the communication.

Recommendations

Based on the internal communication tools audit and information gathered through the various surveys and focus groups, The Frause Group team is pleased to provide the following recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WorkFirst internal communications:

1. **Provide single-point leadership.** Effective and efficient internal and external communication in large disparate organizations, such as WorkFirst, succeeds principally because the organization has a respected and well-spoken CEO. We believe that a significant portion of the communications difficulties experienced by WorkFirst managers and staff has resulted from the disparate cultures of the participating agencies. The lack of a WorkFirst CEO – and accompanying central communication function – forces messaging developed by the WorkFirst Subcommittee management into “communication silos” at the individual agency level. Problems arise when interagency teams and leaders collaborate as part of the overall delivery process. They all have different takes on the same message. We believe communications would significantly improve with the establishment of single-point leadership.
2. **Establish central communications office.** Messages developed at the Subcommittee management level need to be communicated from a central WorkFirst communications office that is not associated with any one participating agency. We believe that the proposed office of the WorkFirst CEO and a central communications office would simplify and strengthen the process for managers and staff alike. This function is not intended to take anything away from individual agencies but instead it is intended to provide a communication umbrella for the entire effort. Communication would be basic, top-line and provided on an equal basis for all participating agencies, managers and staff.
3. **Re-engineer program change process.** The process of change at WorkFirst should be re-engineered to allow for presentation of proposed changes throughout the entire organization before changes are implemented. A process may include a system whereby changes that, whether mandated or inter-agency developed, would be presented with accompanying rationale for a WorkFirst “all agency” review. The review period would be set in advance and everyone would be informed of the process and place to look for change postings. Anyone would be allowed to comment on the proposed change before it is implemented. Comments, similar to the public meeting process, would be considered prior to program change, implementation or withdrawal.

4. **Provide for dynamic two-way internal communication.** Currently the process of communication at all participating WorkFirst agencies is in reality or at best perceived to be one-way only. It is suggested that the top-down communication process that is in place currently be augmented with a bottom-up channel that will allow managers and staff to provide feedback up the line to managers and Subcommittees. Implementation ideas include:
- Because of general administrative protocol that many times forbids communication around line managers, it is suggested that the proposed WorkFirst communications office provide a communication ombudsman to facilitate a full and open two-way communication channel.
 - Although an unusual idea, the creation of a WorkFirst web-based radio or even TV talk show would create interest, enthusiasm and get the attention of staff and managers in all agencies. Produced by the WorkFirst communications office, the program would feature a talk show host who would have weekly guests to talk about important WorkFirst subjects and issues – even the latest proposed program changes. This would all happen over the web. Viewers or listeners would be invited to call in to the show and ask questions of the host and guest. They would also be asked to email questions that would be answered either on the air or emailed back the next day (or within a specified period of time). The program could also feature a weekly poll based on the subject being discussed that week. Viewers or listeners would be invited to respond to the poll. They could be given instant feedback regarding their answers. The show would be promoted to all staff and managers but it would not be mandatory. It has the promise of being a very effective two-way communication vehicle for the WorkFirst program. This is not being done anywhere in the US to our knowledge.
 - A less ambitious two-way communication idea would be to create a subscriber-based WorkFirst email listserv program. Again, this tactic would be promoted as a voluntary communication option and managed by the WorkFirst communications office.
5. **Consolidate and simplify communication tools.** Our investigation turned up a plethora of communications tools and vehicles that are used to deliver pertinent and not so pertinent program messages. We believe that, while some of the vehicles are very good and seem to communicate well, none reflect the total program and are not necessarily cross-agency friendly or effective. It is suggested that more simple communication be considered, including:
- Eliminating WorkFirst web pages at each participating agency in favor of one simple and focused web page that all agencies can access. Links back to agency web sites could allow access to individual agency information

without cluttering up the WorkFirst web site. The web communication editor should be part of the Work First central communications office/function.

- Developing a simple WorkFirst agency morning ezine along the lines of ESD's very well done and well-received Electronic Morning News. To avoid the perceived top-down communication hierarchy, this news service would be subscriber based.
- Providing managers and staff access to the necessary program information on a real-time basis can be achieved simply. We believe that customized search and retrieve information engines could be developed for mass use by all WorkFirst participants. Each employee could customize the information engine to search for a unique list of requested information. It would be delivered back to them on a regular basis. These types of "search, pounce and retrieve" web-based engines already exist and could be employed via the WorkFirst web site.

6. **Consider co-location of program agencies.** The most effective communication tools at work in the WorkFirst program are personal interaction. Our investigations found that when people developed relationships at meetings and over the phone, things that were hard to get done suddenly got easier. For that reason, many of those interviewed – both staff and managers -- suggested that co-locating agencies into consolidated WorkFirst operations could improve communications significantly. Most felt that program performance objectives and goals would be easier to reach. Although this recommendation may be the most difficult to achieve because of financial limitations, we believe that there may be a way to develop virtual co-location sites via the web. This technology is just emerging and should be explored further.
7. **Provide communication guidelines and training.** Even the basic of WorkFirst communication standards do not exist in an interagency format. We suggest the creation of a WorkFirst communication standard that would be developed by the WorkFirst communications office in conjunction with individual agency communication teams. The guide would be published and distributed to all WorkFirst employees. Additionally, communication training would be provided to all managers so that some element of communication continuity could be brought to the program. Consistent communication standards and training should also alleviate the sense that each agency has its own vision and/or mission for the WorkFirst program.
8. **Establish confidentiality and privacy guidelines.** Interagency confidentiality and privacy guidelines do not exist. Individual agencies have some policies but they are often in conflict with other agencies. The proposed WorkFirst communications office should be employed to develop these policies on behalf of

the entire program. The policies should also become part of the communication guidelines recommended above.

9. **Improve, consolidate and interface agency employee databases.** At the root of interagency communication problems are disparate databases of routing (email/phone/address) information for managers and staff. A consolidated effort should be made to standardize and maintain a database of all WorkFirst staff and managers. This would immediately assist in facilitating improved interagency communications.

Recommended Measurements of Success

To measure the effectiveness of proposed improvements to internal communications within the WorkFirst program, the Frause Group team suggests a variety of techniques, including:

- Conducting another manager and staff survey and focus groups (similar to the process we just completed) within one year after implementing the recommendations. The current research can be used as a baseline for the future study.
- Using the information and feedback gained from email questions and weekly polls through the web-based radio or TV talk show will provide instant feedback regarding internal communications and message delivery.
- Using the information gathered during review periods for proposed changes to the program will serve as a useful tool in measuring the effectiveness of improvements to the internal communications within WorkFirst.
- Analyzing whether performance goals are being met or exceeded. If internal communications improves, then staff and managers input should clearly be part of the process for developing performance goals. As a result, their ability to meet or exceed the goals should also improve.

Appendices

The Appendices to this report include the following:

- Report on Community Partners survey and findings
- Community Partners questionnaire and responses
- Managers questionnaire and responses
- Staff questionnaire and responses
- Screening criterion for focus groups